

Concentration in Agriculture:

How much, how serious, and why worry?

Benton Auditorium · Scheman Building · Iowa State University · Ames, Iowa · February 4, 2003

Agenda

- 9:30 a.m. **Gather, coffee and conversation**
- 10:00-11:00 **Current level of concentration in production, processing, and retailing**
Mary Hendrickson, Extension Associate, Network Coordinator Food Circles,
and Extension Assistant Professor of Rural Sociology, University of Missouri, Columbia
- 11:00-noon **Economic impact and impacts of continuing to proceed as we are now**
Neil Harl, Charles F. Curtiss Distinguished Professor in Agriculture, Professor of
Economics, and Director, Center for International Agricultural Finance, Iowa State University
- Noon-1:00 p.m. **Lunch**
- 1:00 - 2:00 **Anti-trust actions: History and current situation**
Doug Ross, Special Counsel for Agriculture, Antitrust Division, U.S. Department of Justice
- 2:00 - 2:30 **Break**
- 2:30 - 3:30 **Alternative policy options: Federal and state**
Doug O'Brien, Counsel for Senate Committee on Agriculture
- 3:30 - 4:30 **Farmer responses: Collective bargaining, new
generation cooperatives, value-added agriculture**
Richard Levins, Professor of Applied Economics,
University of Minnesota, St. Paul



Directions and Parking

The Scheman Building is located in the Iowa State Center on the Iowa State University campus. From Interstate 35, take U.S. Highway 30 west into Ames. Take the Elwood Drive exit and go north past Jack Trice Stadium. The Scheman Building is located between Hilton Coliseum and C.Y. Stephens Auditorium. Free parking is available adjacent to the Scheman Building.

Further Information

For questions about program content, contact Mike Duffy, mduffy@iastate.edu or (515) 294-6160. For registration questions, contact Terrie Hunter (515) 294-5961.

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It's Easy To Register

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Concentration in agriculture is not an abstract concept. It will affect what we eat, what we buy, how we do business, and how we manage our farms.

Missouri-based rural sociologists Bill Heffernan and Mary Hendrickson have predicted that the global retail food system will soon be in the hands of five or six firms, with perhaps only one of them an American firm—Wal-Mart. What does that mean for consumers?

Heavy concentration at the retail level is forcing processors, manufacturers, and seed suppliers to cluster even further to supply mass-produced, uniform supplies at margins acceptable to these mega-firms. Farms, in turn, will need to grow larger to produce the raw materials in mass quantities at lower prices. What does that mean for farmers?

Concentration will have profound effects on the landscape of rural America. Farmers would, of course, buy their equipment and supplies directly from factories instead of local dealers. They would deliver their commodities directly to the firms with whom they contract, instead of to local grain elevators and packing plants. What does that mean for local businesses?

Rural communities will lose their agricultural-related economic base. Animal production factories will become even more concentrated. Larger amounts of land will have to be continuously cropped. Labor on these larger farms would be supplied by minimum-wage workers. What will be the economic and social results for rural communities?

Why should you attend?

Find out what remedies and coping strategies are available. Speakers will address the legal avenues to combat concentration, the policy alternatives for government (both legislative and administrative) to manage the effects of concentration, and ways for farmers to survive, and even thrive, in the world of highly concentrated agriculture.

Who should attend?

Producers, agribusiness people, farm financial officers, legislators, and governmental officials will benefit from the insights provided by the day's speakers. Anyone concerned about the long-term future of small and midsize farms in Iowa will want to hear what these speakers have to say about concentration in today's agriculture.