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Question1:

Question2: U.S. agricultural competitiveness is being further challenged by production in growing and innovative economies, such as China and India. This is particularly true in the area of specialty crops, for which innovations through biotechnology are not feasible due, in part, to excessive regulatory burdens. In the absence of support for adoption of biotechnology in this sector, other crops will follow the track of pineapples and roses which are now produced largely in other countries. The new Farm Bill can help support deployment of biotech innovations by funding SCRI (Specialty Crops Initiative), which will spur the development of biotech specialty crops.

Question3:

Question4:

Question5: Rural development can benefit from the adoption of new crops, particularly those addressing pressing needs for the production of industrial materials or energy from renewable resources, rather than petrochemicals. The new Farm Bill should provide support, at various development stages, for the commercial adoption of new crop varieties engineered for improved biomaterials or bioenergy production. This is a critical area where a long-range strategy is needed to ensure that technology is developed in the absence of immediate commercial incentives.

Question6: One area for expansion lies in the improved quality and post-harvest shelf-life of fruits and vegetables produced in the U.S. Unfortunately, one of the most effective sources of innovation for this improvement, developments in biotechnology, are not readily available to specialty crop producers due to high regulatory costs, regulatory complexity, and associated market uncertainty. The Specialty Crops Regulatory Initiative (SCRI), if funded through means such as the new Farm Bill, will help foster innovation in specialty crops through biotechnology, providing opportunities to sustain and expand global markets for U.S. products. It should be noted that although total acreage is small, nearly 50% of U.S. ag value is derived from specialty crops.