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Question1:

Question2:

Question3: It is imperative that assistance be available for small farmers, particularly if the USDA is interested in promoting the growth of new farmers in this country. The consolidation of farms into the hands of a few wealthy operators is bad for everybody involved.

Question4: Farmers need to be rewarded for conserving soil, water, and timber resources. Current rates of soil erosion, water depletion, and desertification mean that we are thinking only in the very short term.

If we want to have viable farms a hundred years from now, conservation efforts are not an option but an urgent necessity.

Question5: Tax incentives would be a key way to promote the revitalization of rural communities. This is an essential effort in my view. Support of small-scale farming and production/processing would also help revitalize local communities and economies. Right now there is a pronounced bias in favor of big producers and processors which insures the further demise of rural communities.

Question6: Much more USDA funding needs to go to support these smaller operations. An agricultural system based on massive monocultures (and the subsidies they garner) is destructive of a diverse agricultural economy. Consumers welcome diverse, value-added products. Producers need whatever support they can be given in the form of research assistance, grants, and tax incentives.