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Question1: Don't worry so much about the profits of multi-national corporations, oops, I mean, global competitiveness. Stop being USDA, Inc. The US of A has higher goals. The USDA is directed to look out for justice and equality for all. Support all farmers in producing the best food and fiber possible and improving our air, water, and wildlife.

The best thing that could happen would be to take at least half of the crop subsidies and fund CSP all the way. Let the ingenuity and drive of the American farmer embark on a new contract with the American people. We need to produce food that is not one part calorie, two parts oil.

Our farmers can produce methane from manure, wind power and do oh so much more with modern grazing techniques. The future is in food that is local, humane, just and not oozed out of a tube in a factory. We can't compete with the land and labor costs of the Brazils of the world. Nor can we export our way to economic salvation. Now, if we could use our trade negotiations not to race to the bottom in terms of labor standards, wages and land stewardship, but to help bring everyone up to a higher standard, then we would get somewhere with ?global competitiveness?. What, after all, is the purpose of agriculture?

Question2: Help new farmers! Liberal credit, subsidies, insurance and technical support. Limit farm payments to those that need it --Real limits on farm payments (read what former Sec. of Ag. Henry Wallace had to say). Explain the many important reasons why new farmers are a good thing for our country and help them. Help take away the speculative price of land for strip malls and starter castles. Articulate why agriculture is important (read what former NRCS Chief Paul Johnson had to say). Provide health care and retirement to farmers. Help traditional family farmers, that is, those that live on the farm, provide most of the labor and have their own credit at risk.

Question3: Well, current farm support system does encourage increases in farm size and results in the disproportionate distribution of program benefits to large farms, and, program incentives do lead to increased production and lower market prices. Duh. So, balance it out. Change it around. Kick mega-corporation out of USDA! Limit payments based on helping farmers who do the best job of producing food and fiber and clean water and clean air and wildlife habitat and preserve?fruited plains, amber waves of grain and purple mountains majesty!! Put real caps on payments. Level the playing field. Hell, even the NFL does this --for the health of their organization. Ask yourself, very carefully: what is USDA for?

Question4: This is an easy one: FULLY FUND THE CSP (and all the technical support needed to completely change American agriculture to what it once was: the envy of the world). Just give former NRCS Chief Paul Johnson a call. You'll need to kick multi-national mega corp. out of the halls of USDA and take the billions of dollars wasted on them and resource degrading, surplus endusing farming practices and fund CSP (Did you travel the corn/soy belt last spring? The soil erosion was nothing less than a national calamity that went unreported). It will be

the greatest thing we could do in this century. Look at the trends. Do you think jet fuel at three times what it is now will forever allow us to ship flowers and everything else from the other side of the planet? We need to ask: What is going to be going on 10, 20 and 50 years from now (not next quarter)?

Question5: Health care. A decent retirement. Education. Prevent suburban sprawl (In the immortal words of Will Rodgers: They ain't making any more of it (land)). These are not traditional USDA areas of responsibility but they should be. Our policies need to be holistic, systematic. Subsidize health care, retirement and education for traditional family farmers (those that live on their own land, provide the bulk of the labor on the farm and have their own capital at risk). Help farmers find real value in new crops and new marketing arrangements. Enough number 2 corn already! If they can be profitable, healthy and have a real retirement plan that, hold on to your heads, allows them half a chance to stay on their land and pass it on to the next generation (family or others), they won't sell out to land speculators, communities will be more stable. We threw the baby out with the bathwater after WWII in terms of some really important community values in our rush to make farming more efficient and easier, two laudable goals.

Question6: ??attention to product quality and new attributes; organic and specialty crops; value-added products, including renewable energy and bioproducts and new uses for farm products generally; expanded basic and applied research; domestic and foreign market development; and similar activities.? Yes. Yes. Yes. Plus community supported agriculture, agro-forestry, agro-ecology, agro-tourism, control of invasive species, production of native species, wild cropping, and farming wild, farming in ways that re-connects wildlife habitat and natural systems.