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Question1: This question is based on assumptions I do not agree with. One of the primary causes of the overproduction and low prices of our major commodities is agricultural policy that over decades has favored large mechanized, chemical-dependent farms over family farms. Overproduction is encouraged by cutthroat profit margins managed through subsidies, by credit given to farmers over the years to purchase expensive farm machinery, that could only become economically viable if they bought their neighbor's farms and increased their acreage for subsidized commodity production. I believe the solution to this chronic problem is to enact policy that provides disincentives to overproduce, puts in place basic price floors or minimum pricing, that provides significant subsidies for farmers who fallow and conserve their soil, who do not pollute nearby water sources, etc... We do not have to feed the world. We should wean ourselves off this notion of using food to create dependency and dominate the agricultural food markets of other countries. Competitiveness for large subsidized U.S. farmers means bankruptcies and massive emigration from the countryside in other countries. Take the example of Mexico since we flooded their market with surplus corn, much of it GMO. Since NAFTA came into effect in 1994, we lowered the price of corn substantially in Mexico, broke their price support mechanism, drove an estimated 2 million farmers off their lands and fueled undocumented migration to the U.S.

We need policies that consider a national supply management system for the major trade commodities, to maintain a decent price for those commodities on the world market, lower the need for export markets and raise the profitability of U.S. agriculture. It is time we support the actual producers and not those who want cheap grain for CAFOs, for CONAGRA or to export to other countries, as is done by Cargill and ADM and others, who have virtually monopoly control over grain trade.

The concept of food sovereignty as conceived by the Via Campesina movement is sustainable perspective on agriculture. Small family farmers actually produce between 200 and 1000% more calories of food per acre than do large monocultures, because they fit a diversity of production into the various biological niches of the land. Family farming is the first victim of the assumption that only through export market competitiveness can U.S. agriculture survive. This is a false reasoning and needs to be reversed.

I am a member of the Community Farm Alliance of Kentucky, and have collaborated with the umbrella organization the National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC), who participate at the international advocacy level as part of the Via Campesina movement. We oppose the corporate welfare system known as the commodity subsidies. The historically low prices created by past farm policy are buffered through subsidies, but the end result is cheap grain for the industries that want monopoly control over our meat and grains and milk. The U.S. farmer is not the beneficiary of these policies.

Question2: There are many unintended consequences to U.S. agricultural

policy to date. Mad cow disease, E-coli outbreaks, antibiotic resistance across the populace due to agricultural use of antibiotics, family farm bankruptcies and suicide rate, and dirt cheap prices for farm products. High land prices due to 'capitalization of program benefits into land prices' is another nail in the coffin of rural communities in the U.S. The 2007 Farm Bill should contain funding for low interest loans and grants for landless farmers to purchase farmsteads. It should provide incentives to low-input, organic production for local and regional markets that does not cause water pollution, or confine animals to be fattened like in some bad science fiction movie. The 2007 farm bill should ban the feeding of animal protein products to what nature intended to be vegetarian animals, namely cattle. Rendered animal protein is the known cause of mad cow disease. Testing of all animals for mad cow disease should be implemented. The conditions in meat packing houses need to be radically reformed, to avoid unhealthy e-coli outbreaks. This can be best done by applying anti-trust laws on the existing virtual monopolies in the meat packing industry, by applying stricter environmental standards on those industries, by banning irradiation (sterilizing the shit) as a method of white washing an excremental and unhealthy industry, by regulating the kill line speeds in those factories, and by applying labor standards to the workers in those factories.

Question3: Farm policy should be based on consultation with farmer organizations, (not agro chemical corporations, the anti-progressive Farm Bureau, CAFOs or commodity exporters) and not just those farmer whose scale of operation has made them dependent and beholden to corporate interests. We need to reverse that dependency. Subsidies or farmer support should be based not just on the yields of monocultures such as corn, soybeans, cotton, milk or peanuts. Rather it should be based on how well farmers supply their local markets (and not export markets), it should put a premium on low-input agriculture and organic agriculture, and it should reward farmers who avoid the problems associated with chemical industrial agriculture: high antibiotic use, high level of soil erosion, depletion of soil nutrients through dependency on chemical fertilizers, high quantities of nitrates emitted into the environment, especially surface and underground water supplies, and it should reward fallowing of land for biological diversity, riparian protection of waterways, sustainable yield woodlots, and wildlife protection. Subsidies could be provided for farmers who produce vegetables, fruits and grains that are marketed locally and regionally, based on gross sales, and not dependent on a lot of red tape such as with the newly established organic certification. Organic certification should be streamlined so that producers of dozens of varieties of vegetables can get blanket certification and not have to certify each sort of thing they grow.

Question4: A healthy family farm system with decent prices and limits on overproduction will go a long way in making agriculture less environmentally harmful. Helping small producers provide to local markets will do more to reach those environmental goals of non-contamination, and the maintenance of soil fertility, than many bureaucratic maneuvers one could invent. However, in the short and medium term, farmers should receive support from the government for every acre of land they do not erode, for every forested area they manage sustainable, for avoiding the use of industrial sludge or other contaminated sources of fertilizer, for recycling all organic wastes, for maintaining their own diverse seed supplies. One of the gravest threats to the biodiversity of our food crops is the slide toward patented seeds, including transgenic or GMO seeds. Taking seeds out of the hands of farmers who traditionally managed seeds is a greater threat to the future of agriculture than humanity has seen in the history of

agriculture. GMO contamination of even medicinal GMO products into the food supply, the risk of cross-breeding among wild plants, and the assault by corporations such as Monsanto on farmers who save seed that is sometimes contaminated by pollen drift are all dire threats to the environment. Farm policy should reward farmers who avoid using GMO products. (Monsanto should not be the only entity whose opinions are taken seriously by the USDA, the FDA and even the White House. They are responsible for a new form of feudal agriculture where farmers do not even own the capital, the seeds, necessary to produce, but must pay royalties to the feudal lords from St. Louis.)

Question5: Assistance can be delivered to rural communities in the form of grants and loans for the rebuilding of the infrastructure necessary for a thriving localized agricultural food system. Our experience here in Kentucky is that even with family farmers willing to diversify and aim toward living from local markets, there is a low of infrastructure missing between the farm and the consumer. Funds for local slaughter facilities for chickens, pigs and cattle would be helpful. Assistance and loans for building food processing facilities on farm for value-added products like cheese, yogurt, milled and processed grains, a streamlining of regulations for hygiene in such facilities so as not to penalize small operations and make the expense of capital investments too high for small scale operations. Support for the creation of new farmer markets. Start up funding for canning facilities, etc...

Technologies such as transgenic or GMO technologies should not be funded by the USDA. We reject the funding of biotech corporations who are eager to prey on farmers.

Question6: Most of the examples cited above will help mainly corporate-oriented sectors of the agricultural economy. The use of vegetable oil for diesel fuel may be good to support. But the perspective that calls for a renewing of a local food economy does not find these mass marketing schemes to be helpful for the survival of the family farmer. Applied research needs to be scaled down for small production units: family farms, and they need to reduce the use of fossil fuels in agriculture. Money could be better spent renewing the infrastructure for localized agricultural markets than for grandiose schemes of running industry on the production of corn, a highly inefficient crop to grow as currently done with massive inputs and externalized costs (ie soil erosion filling up the Gulf of Mexico, as one example, or the proven unhealthy diet of corn syrups found in almost all processed foods, that attempt to supersize all of us.)