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Farm Bill 2007  
Official Commen...

Responses to questionnaire about 2007 Farm Bill

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1. How should farm policy be designed to maximize U.S. competitiveness and our country's ability to effectively compete in global markets?

Certified organic foods are more in line with the demands of European markets. Organic beef and chicken are in particularly high demand. Rather than producing the cheapest food available, American farmers should concentrate on the production of healthy, high quality, and high value foods.

2. How should farm policy address any unintended consequences and ensure that such consequences do not discourage new farmers and the next generation of farmers from entering production agriculture?

The high cost of land is one of the problems facing young ranchers and farmers. So much of the land is owned by absentee landlords that the caretakers often abuse the land. Without government programs to allow purchase of overworked or under-utilized lands, this waste and abuse will continue. The Farm Services Loan program is an excellent approach to this problem; however, a farmer must first be turned down by a commercial lender (at a high interest rate). In my own efforts to finance my New Mexico organic farm, I was not turned down by a commercial lender and am now saddled with a \$30,000 loan at 12% interest. Requiring FSA loan applicants to first apply to commercial banks and then be turned down ensures that only bad credit applicants obtain loans.

Finally, organic farm operations need infrastructure improvements? certified organic livestock auctions, feed and seed operations, farm implement dealers that specialize in small farm production.

The problem with high land prices might also be solved with farm rental programs that encourage modern share-cropping arrangements, i.e. one-third of profit sharing operations.

3. How should farm policy be designed to effectively and fairly distribute assistance to producers?

If organic farm production can be subsidized in its early stages, the nature of demand exceeding supply will naturally reduce farm subsidies at the time of harvest. Corporate farm subsidies artificially lower prices and drive out small producers.

4. How can farm policy best achieve conservation and environment goals?

For too long America's farm production has depended on pesticides, herbicides, synthetic fertilizers, and hybrid, genetically-modified seed stocks that poison the natural environment. Organic farm methods restore the balance of nature, as well as enrich the soil and protect our rivers, streams, and lakes. Remarkably, chemically saturated soils can be restored to organic production in three years. Open-pollinated seed stock can be saved and replenished, ending the dependency and expense of purchasing new seeds every year. Heirloom seed stocks are, in addition, suited to specific soils and altitudes, making the growing process more productive.

Finally, farm workers are not endangered by carcinogenic chemicals during the organic process.

5. How can Federal rural and farm programs provide effective assistance in rural areas?

The re-invigoration of rural America is the most important challenge facing agriculture today. The enormous and destructive machines that now roam the rural landscape require few people to drive the tractors, trucks and massive combines. In excellent, well-watered farm regions, hundreds of working farm families now already involve themselves in the organic farm process. For example, organic laying hens require organic corn or milo maize for feed. Family owned producers are selling their eggs for two and three times the price that the corporations' eggs generate. Free range laying hens are also healthier and less susceptible to disease; therefore they require no expensive antibiotics to keep the animals disease-free. Certified organic corn or milo maize or wheat producers require local organic mills to grind and/or mix the laying rations. Organic wheat sold for organic bakery goods sell at five times what conventional wheat brings.

Egg producers will require employees to package and deliver the eggs. This regionalization of small businesses will regenerate rural areas and provide employment for people who want to live in rural environments.

Every aspect of organic farm production, including the growing of specialty and high value crops, will improve the life of the community. Organic farming works best with small farms. In my own experience on my New Mexico farm I saw profits of two to three thousand dollars an acre. This included Seeds of Change organic seed production, the wheat I sold for bread, and the straw I sold for straw bale houses at \$3.50 a bale. Through this experience I saw the promise of profitable organic farm units.

6. How should agricultural product development, marketing and research-related issues be addressed in the next farm bill?

The opportunities to expand agricultural products are also tied to the future of organic production. In seed production alone, the market is expanding, and the variety of crops fits the changing environments of every agricultural region. From producing organic corn, squash, and bean seed to the growing of organic asparagus and beans for the table, the variety of production will restore the balance to our farming places. As the world demand for organic farm products continues to increase, so will the markets. Organic farm research must replace the petro-agriculture our universities perpetuate. Organic experiments and methods must be taught at the universities in order to improve and spread successful farm ventures. In these days of prohibitively expensive petroleum products, small farms that work with solar, wind, and horse drawn implements can produce food with

help for the environment and little expense in equipment. Through some criticize organic farm production because it requires more labor, this demand for well-paid and safe work will in fact further enliven rural America.

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