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Question1: If prices continue to rise, the only people who will be able to afford to buy farmland will be developers (already happening around urban centers). High quality agricultural land must be protected through price controls on the land prices. Crop diversification should be encouraged to allow farmers to derive more profit from specialty crops, which also helps conserve soil.

Question2: See first comment.

Question3: Larger producers have their costs distributed over a larger market base. The small farms have increased cost due to their smaller market share. Perhaps a 'grange' system or cooperative of small farms in an area would help distribute costs more evenly, like the Amish do.

Question4: The NRCS does a pretty good job of getting voluntary enrollment in a number of programs. My brother-in-law, a dairy farmer in the Chesapeake Bay area, decided finally to enroll in a nutrient containment program to reduce runoff into the watershed after he was offered an opportunity to demonstrate his system to other farmers, paid for by USDA, to encourage prevention of NPS pollution. More outreach is needed to get more farmers to enroll. More visibility of other state and federal programs working to protect water quality and wildlife habitat is needed. New technologies need to be incorporated in BMPs.

Question5: See above. Education programs and demonstration sites can help educate farmers and city folks alike about BMPs. I was raised in rural Pennsylvania, and worked on farms. My father was a deputy game commissioner. Almost all farmers back in the 50s and 60s were encouraged to plant cover and food plants for wildlife. Unfortunately, many were exotics that now ravage the country. Farmers need to know that exotic weeds not only devastate the cropland, but also reduce native habitat.

Computer technology can facilitate development of markets for specialized crops or products from rural areas.

Question6: Development of new products described above is an important avenue for encouraging young farmers to pursue farming as an occupation, and not just as a hobby.

Research (USDA ARS) is needed to develop efficient technologies for these agriculturally related products. Genetically engineered products must meet strict environmental standards. Already the scientific community has reported that Round-up ready genes in rapeseed are being found in wild Brassica sp.