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Question1: Capitalization of productivity increases as well as actual site improvements assisted by USDA programs should be offset by additional programs. We should be training new farmers, but also supporting existing farmers who do not participate in "production agriculture" programs whose contribution to the agricultural economy may also be valuable. I recently returned from a trip to Italy where I saw many farms thriving at much smaller scale than in the US and providing local economies with needed commodities that did not enter the world market, but stayed local. There is value in supporting these economies in the face of globalization. They add to our food security by strengthening local economies.

Question2: As in other commodities, the US will never win global trade competition on sheer volume. Programs that increase commodity quality will allow us to command higher prices. This includes development of new products and the marketing of these products. This requires a more vertically coordinated USDA working as the go-between among researchers, economists, agronomists, farmers, and trade professionals. Cross-cultural training is also important to discover and understand the particular needs of foreign markets.

Question3: This is the biggest failure of the current system and the one that has been toughest to fix. There is no evidence that I have seen that there is public benefit from consolidation of farm ownership. Yet policies have encouraged this through price supports, which tend to favor larger producers. We need new policies that stabilize farm income in other ways, such as diversification of farm economies. I realize that simply ending the programs would be a shock to the system, but aggressive phase-back is necessary.

Question4: USDA programs have been successful in promoting conservation goals and should continue and expand. Soil conservation, water quality and energy efficiency programs need to be reworked and expanded in the face of globalization to insure that we are not stripping our foundations to meet world market pressures. Additional programs for the management of national forests and non-commodity ecosystems also provides substantial economic benefits and should be expanded as well as population pressures increase.

Question5: I don't know the answer to this, but it is a very important question. As a policy issue, I think it is important to keep people on the land, and to make rural culture viable. Part of this is programming to reverse the isolation that typically accompanies rural life.

Question6: As I stated above in Question #2, this is critical to competitiveness, as well as the economic well being of farm communities. USDA historically has been successful in supporting new trends in ag. production and should continue leadership in training and outreach to farmers and foresters for creative commodity production. I especially see the growth of organic commodities as a harbinger of the increasing sensitivity of the population to the details of how the food system works and the USDA could increase research, marketing transparency and

consumer education to enhance this rapidly growing market.