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Question1: In our area young farmers are having a very difficult time finding land to rent or buy because of the CRP program. Having 2 sons and 1 son-in-law who have recently made the decision to return to the farm, we are very aware of this. Older farmers are using the CRP program as a retirement program instead of renting or selling their land to the next generation. The CRP payments are substantially higher than reasonable cash rent, so it is hard to blame them for their decision, but it is forcing most of the next generation of farmers to leave this area. Just in the last year, we had a neighbor sign up 1200 acres of the best land in this area into a 15 year CRP contract. This is land that could have gone a long way towards supporting a young farm family, had it been rented to them instead of the federal government, and now it is unavailable for the next 15 years. How is our government helping young farmers and ranchers by out bidding them for good farmland?

Question2:

Question3: Economics are driving the move to increased farm size. It simply takes more acres to support a family, because of increasing costs of inputs with no increase in the price of our products. In that environment, the best way to get more efficient is to cover more acres with the same equipment. I'm not sure if the farm program is contributing to that, unless it is depressing the prices for our products.

Question4: How about rewarding the ones who have been doing the right thing on their own. Current policy seems to reward those who have been abusing their resources in order to entice them into providing good stewardship, while ignoring those who are already providing good stewardship, at their own expense.

Question5: See the comments to question 1. It is hard to have rural economic growth when the government is contributing to the removal of an entire generation. There are very few jobs in this area that are not related to agriculture, and CRP just takes away more of those jobs, unless you want to work for NRCS.

Question6: The government might be able to help in the area of research-related issues. Other than that the best thing government can do is to stay out of the way and let private industry work on product development and marketing. Government is inefficient to be of help in those areas.