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Question1:
Question2:
Question3:
Question4:
Question5: MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Mike Johanns, Secretary of Agriculture
The Honorable Chuck Conner, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture

FROM: James M. McGuire, Manager of Springdale AR Farmers' Market and Board Member, Arkansas Farmers' Market Association.

I am manager of the Springdale AR Farmers' Market and a vendor at that market. In these comments, I am also representing the Arkansas Farmers' Market Association, made up of farmers' markets throughout the State of Arkansas.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input as the USDA works toward its recommendations for the 2007 Farm Bill. And thank you for holding a hearing on the Farm Bill in Arkansas.

Support of small family farming operations, and nutritional assistance to low-income pregnant women and their children and to senior adults have long been priorities of the USDA. It is important to continue these as priorities in the future to help maintain a healthy U. S. population, and to encourage small farmers to provide necessary products.

The Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) currently administered by the USDA with components for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and Seniors nutrition programs, is very important to the farmers' markets and the small farmer vendors who provide fruits, vegetables and herbs for purchase by customers at these markets. Significant portions of the customer base at our farmers' markets in Arkansas are low-income individuals and families who qualify for WIC or Seniors assistance. For example, for the past 5 years at the Springdale Farmers' Market, 25-30% of gross produce sales annually is to customers with WIC coupons. Many of those who qualify are minorities.

There has been a growth nationally in the number of producers marketing products directly. According to the Agricultural Marketing Service of the USDA, the number of farmers' markets steadily increased and more than doubled nationally from 1775 in 1994 to 3706 in 2004. And according to the Census of Agriculture, \$5.7 million of Arkansas agricultural products were sold directly to consumers in 2002. This estimate represents an increase of 6% over the previous 1997 census, and has doubled since 1992. It is believed that much of the

direct marketing volume is produced by small farmers and goes through farmers' markets, which are growing in popularity. Such growth nationally and in this state is expected to continue.

Funding in the USDA for the FMNP in 2005 was reduced from the 2004 level of \$25 million each for the WIC and Seniors components. Continuation of the FMNP program, and funding at a minimum of \$50 million is urged.

Some components of these comments are also applicable to Question 6.

Question6: