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Question1: The biggest barrier that I've encountered as a new and relatively small farmer is the tremendous expense of legally hiring outside labor. The "overhead" costs of bringing on the first employee have deterred expansion - despite strong demand for my products.

Question2: I don't think we can compete well in global markets, and should instead focus on domestic marketing. There is no way that we can be the low cost producer of field crops without artificially lowering the cost of inputs - and this leads to all sorts of environmental abuses.

Question3: Subsidized crop insurance is OK, but direct crop payments to farmers serves no useful purpose in the long run. I would support paying farmers to manage land in certain sustainable ways, but paying us to produce more of something that is already overproduced is a poor use of taxpayers money. What I need to stay competitive is more agricultural and marketing research and promotion - on specialty crops. There is a tremendous imbalance between money spent on program crops and money spent on specialty crops - that now are equally valuable and create more jobs.

Question4: If we farmers are to receive government money, it should be to help us achieve goals of stewardship - not money to just produce food. This has led to tremendous environmental degradation that future generations will pay for.

Question5: Infrastructure improvements that would most benefit me would be farmers markets - near more urban areas.

Question6: The next farm bill should have a healthy dose of money allocated to research on specialty crops, and include non-edible products like nursery crops and flowers in the mix. In my area, these are the real drivers of the farm economy - not dairy and field crops farms. As a strawberry farmer, I want more research to help me with my problems - not a hand-out. Give me the tools I need to compete. I don't want government welfare.