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Question1: Some specific proposals for new and beginning farmers: USDA should support policies and programs that encourage growth of small and medium-sized farms; for example, Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) and Value-Added Program Grants (VAPG) should be expanded and directed in part at the promotion of younger generations in agriculture. USDA should also implement the many beginning farmer and rancher provisions of the 2002 Farm Bill, including increased promotion of the Beginning Farmer land contract pilot program, using the authorization for special conservation incentives for beginning farmers and ranchers, and seeking funding for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program.

Question2: Limits must be set on government subsidies, but not at the expense of driving farmers and ranchers off the land. By reducing farm commodity payments to reasonable levels, the money saved should be transferred into conservation "green" payments. The ideal form of support payments should go into the Conservation Security Program. Government subsidies should be targeted to small and mid-sized farms, by capping payment levels at \$250,000 or less and eliminating loopholes. Increased farm payments translate into higher cash rents and land purchase prices, leaving beginning farmers out of the picture. USDA should help enact the Grassley-Dorgan payment limitations bill.

Question3: Congress should enact the Grassley-Dorgan payment limitations bill (S. 385, Rural America Preservation Act).

We need to restore effective payment limitations to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and to provide safeguards against using EQIP to expand concentrated livestock production.

Question4: The Conservation Security Program, which rewards farmers for effective conservation and advanced stewardship, should become the quintessential program of the USDA. The CSP can serve as the foundation on which to build future farm policy; this program marks a shift from policies that favor commodity production to a renewed emphasis on environmental stewardship of working lands. This program also serves the urgent need to move away from trade-distorting production subsidies. The Conservation Security Program needs to be fully funded and rapidly implemented so that any farmer and rancher in the country can enroll.

For land that is particularly environmentally sensitive and should be removed from agricultural production, emphasis should be placed on cost-effective and long-term easement strategies that maximize environmental protection. This could occur through existing programs like Conservation Reserve or Wetlands Reserve, or through new programs as devised in the spirit of caring for creation.

Also, USDA needs to restore effective implementation and enforcement of conservation compliance features of the Farm Bill. Weak enforcement now

threatens the gains that had been made on reducing soil erosion.

Question5: The majority of new jobs emerging in rural areas are non-farm related. Financial support for rural entrepreneurial and small business development is an important strategy to support rural areas. Examples of such support include (1) rural micro-enterprise grants programs that provide loans and technical assistance, and (2) individual development accounts as proposed in the New Homestead Opportunities Act.

Question6: USDA needs to demonstrate a real commitment to organic research and outreach. USDA should also include major funding for the new Farmers Market Promotion Program and Farm-to-Cafeteria program in its budget requests and endorse them as major farm bill initiatives.

Finally, renewable farm-based energy is certain to become an essential part of future farm bills.