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Question1: It is important to re-evaluate the current system in favor of creating more small-scale sustainable farms. Farms of this type may not offer large corporate profit at first, but over time they will offer the most stable source of food for our country and provide a long term profits far exceeding any apparent short term benefits gained by industrial agricultural development.

Question2: The reason the U.S. is suffering on the global market is a complete lack of innovation. Innovation is being stifled by the big business mentality. We need to research alternative farming techniques to find ecologically sound ways of boosting yields. Much of this work has been done, and is published in peer reviewed scientific literature. It is important to listen to our ecologists and farmers and not big business. New business will grow out of a new paradigm if we let them, but as long as we continue to pander to large agro businesses our production will continue to falter and our soil will continue to degrade.

Question3: Gross annual output should not be the only criteria for assistance. Instead a new model taking into account long-term production and innovation needs to be enacted. In this way small farmers who innovate and work sustainable will be helped, and so will larger farms, if they are flexible enough to change farming models.

Question4: If farm policy is changed to assist innovation and sustainability, conservation and environmental goals will follow in hand. The most important thing is to give opportunities to young future farmers, fund ecological education, and award innovation and sustainability instead of following agricultural model that panders to big businesses with only short-term profit in mind. The best thing for the country is to create a network of sustainable innovative farms that can support the food needs of the U.S. and the world in the long term.

Question5: Investing in new technologies is a good start, and helping farmers who innovate can help strengthen rural communities. More, smaller, more flexible farms that practice polyculture instead of chemical supported monoculture will automatically help re-create the rural identity that we have lost over the last 50 years.

Question6: Great care should be given to designing a bill that supports innovation and sustainability. These two criteria will help to create an agricultural system in which farms internalize costs and produce more quantity of more crops. Farm specialization, in most cases, is dangerous. Biodiversity is a keystone for a strong ecosystem. This is as true in farming as it is in the wild. By supporting applied research in permaculture techniques, and sustainable yield agriculture as well as ecological education, we can assure that our farms are producing a surplus of food well into the next millennium. With global flux in climate it is even more important to encourage a diverse agricultural system that can lend stability to the biosphere as a whole, and our country in particular