

From: "smbelcas@cs.xu.edu%inter2" <smbelcas@cs.xu.edu>
Subject: Farm Bill 2007 Official Comments - 12/23/2005 10:31 AM CST
Date Sent: 12/23/2005 10:31:19 CST
Date Received: 12/23/2005 10:32:25 CST

Email: smbelcas@cs.xu.edu

FirstName: sarah-marie

LastName: belcastro

Address1: 90 Bay Road

Address2:

City: Belchertown

State: Massachusetts

zipcode: 01007

Question1: The easiest way to address "unintended consequences" of any policy is to respond to those who are directly affected. If, for example, capitalization of program benefits into land prices is a problem, then an offset or exemption should be designed to nullify the effect.

Question2: In order to compete in global markets, we should focus on two factors: (1) Products which originate in multiple locations (such as oranges) should be distributed locally in order to reduce transportation costs (so that Ohio will receive oranges from the U.S. rather than abroad). Appropriate tariffing can help with this. (2) Products which are special to certain locations (coffee is one example, and US organic foods are another) should be promoted. Anything we produce that other countries don't produce with our quality/effectiveness/etc. will help us compete in the global marketplace. So we need to reduce barriers to receiving such products from other countries in order to open avenues to promote our own.

Question3: Production levels need to be measured in several ways (per employee, per acre, and total production, for example). Limits can be placed on who is available for what kind of assistance so that no increases in size or disproportion of benefit distribution will result.

If you don't know how to do this, get some mathematical consultants.

There are folks in academic economics departments, the Department of Labor, at RAND, and in the insurance industry who specialize in exactly this sort of calculation.

Question4: Slant benefits so that incentives exist for farmers converting to organic (or already in organic practice), those who practice sustainable agriculture, etc.

Question5: Factory farms are the problem. Work against factory farms and for small farms, and rural Iowa (where I lived most of my life) will return to its former nature. New technologies are good, but federal lack-of-support for factory farms would be better.

Question6: Very carefully. Expanding basic research is a great idea but should be limited to grants to academic institutions; we need to be sure, when we look at value-added products, that big corporations don't receive support for wacky GMOs that aren't sufficiently tested by independent (_truly_ independent) researchers.