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Question1: In the past the answer to these kinds of questions has always been subsidies. The government provides more than enough subsidies to the big, factory farms with their conveyor belt slaughter methods.

Subsidies should be given to the small, family owned farms on the condition that they treat animals humanely (meaning a prohibitions on the use of animal confinement and mutilations, space allowances for animals and strict adherence to the Animal Welfare Act). Under no circumstances should subsidies be given to the large factory farms, enabling them to increase profits from their notorious lack of consideration for humane farm methods.

Question2: US competitiveness is not as important as humane farming practices. The US is lagging behind the rest of the industrialized nations by allowing inhumane farm practices to continue, such as use of battery cages for chickens, crates for pregnant sows and veal, animal mutilations and the lack of protections for poultry. New regulations must be imposed to require more humane standards of care for farm animals. Existing laws regulating animal care must be enforced. As the world's biggest superpower, the US has a moral obligation to set a good example in the area of humane standards of care for farm animals. Instead of falling behind in the area of humane farming, we should institute more regulations to be more in line with our European counterparts and to ensure that animals are treated humanely during life and at slaughter. We must not produce every product demanded throughout the world, such as horse meat or foie gras. Such products are objectionable to most Americans due to their cruel production methods. Any agricultural products imported from other countries should be produced using methods to ensure humane care of animals. We must not participate in the live shipment of animals, and should not import live animals. Before the US can compete effectively in the agricultural global market, we must follow the Europeans and take steps to improve the conditions and handling of farm animals.

Question3: Current government assistance uses taxpayer dollars to subsidize the cruel and inhumane treatment of farm animals. Government subsidies encourage the development of large, factory farms that do not take into consideration humane animal handling practices. To increase production levels, these large, government subsidized farms utilize an assembly line method for slaughter and do not take the time to ensure that animals are rendered senseless to pain before slaughter (as required by the Animal Welfare Act). Moreover, these factory farms are notorious for the intensive confinement of animals, mutilations (such as cutting of the beaks of chickens), and other cruel animal handling techniques. Taxpayer dollars should not finance and encourage these cruel practices. Subsidies should be used only for small farms that practice humane animal handling techniques.

Question4: Research shows that the methane produced from factory farms is the single leading cause of global warming, more so than carbon dioxide. To best protect and conserve the environment, crop farms

should be encouraged instead of farms raising animals. At the very least, the USDA should establish space allowance requirements for animals, limit the number of animals allowed on a farm, and regulate the disposal of waste from farm animals.

Question5: The first step in assisting rural areas would be to stop subsidizing large factory farms, which force the smaller, rural farms out of business. The government should instead be subsidizing the small, rural farms that practice humane animal handling techniques. Any subsidies given by the government should not be based on production numbers, but should instead be based on the humane treatment of animals. The government should also require increased animal welfare regulations, such as free roaming animals, space allowances, prohibitions on confinement and number of animals, and increased humane slaughter techniques (for all animals, including sheep and poultry). These regulations would encourage the development of more rural, family owned.

Question6: Americans have become more aware of their food quality and the treatment of farm animals. This has been caused by attention brought to the cruel animal handling practices utilized by factory farms and the awareness of health issues caused by factory farms (mad cow disease, bird flu, etc.). The government should increase the standards for farm animal welfare, how most of Europe has done. Animal confinement (e.g. veal crates, battery cages, gestation crates) should be prohibited, space allowances for animals must be given, mutilations must be stopped, and there must be an increase in the regulation of humane slaughter practices, and these must apply to ALL animals (including poultry and sheep). Moreover, Americans are becoming more aware of the environmental hazards caused by farming. These should be addressed by discouraging large, factory farms with cruel animal handling techniques and notorious records of pollution. The future in agricultural development lies in increased humane standards for animals, smaller farms and thus better animal treatment and less waste and pollution, and increased inspections and enforcement by the USDA.