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BFRDP Stakeholder Input Meeting

Date: October 27, 2008
Time: 9:06 a.m.
Location: USDA CSREES
800 9th Street, SW
Washington, DC

1 DR. OTTO: Good morning, everybody.

2 (Good morning.)

3 DR. OTTO: How are we today? Good.

4 (Good.)

5 DR. OTTO: We have nice, crisp autumnal
6 weather, if nothing else. I am Ralph Otto. I am the
7 associated administrator of the Cooperative State
8 Research Education and Extension Service. It's my
9 pleasure to welcome you to the Waterfront Center. This
10 is the home of our agency, the home of CSREES.

11 We're here to have a listening session on the
12 Beginning Farmer and Ranchers Development Program.
13 Historically our agency and its predecessor agencies have
14 been partnership groups. We've always worked in
15 partnership. Whatever we've accomplished it's been by
16 taking advantage of the power and resources of others.
17 And for that reason we tend to take stakeholder and
18 customer input very seriously.

19 In 1998 the Congress enacted the Agricultural
20 Research, Education and Extension Reform Act. And that
21 piece of legislation codified how we were to go about
22 getting input. It says that: "The secretary must

1 solicit input from those who conduct research, extension,
2 and education programs, and those who benefit from the
3 results of those programs."

4 So far this year, with our new Farm Bill,
5 we've had occasion to do quite a bit of listening. On
6 September 10th we had a listening session in this room
7 dealing with the Agriculture and Food Research
8 Initiative. On the 15th we had a listening session on
9 the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program. On
10 October 6th we had an internal listening session on how
11 our 3D Extension Program affects the Integrated Pest
12 Management Program, in view of changes promulgated by the
13 Farm Bill. Then on October 12th we were in Denver for a
14 listening session, seeking to define a new category of
15 institutions, Hispanic-serving agricultural colleges and
16 universities. And that gets us to today, our listening
17 session for the Beginning Farmer and Ranchers Development
18 Program.

19 This program originated in 2002, but we're
20 excited, because the Food Conservation and Energy Act of
21 2008, our new Farm Bill, has done something fairly
22 significant, and that is to make mandatory funding

1 available in the amount of \$18 million. This is a lot of
2 money. It's an exciting program for us. We think it
3 jump starts an important area of the work that we do.
4 But we are also very, very much aware that what we will
5 do is pretty much administer the program from quite a
6 distance away from where the action really is.

7 That's where you folks come in. In order for
8 us to be successful, you guys have to be successful. You
9 and those who you represent. We can't do the programing
10 ourselves at local level. It's neither the intention of
11 the Congress, nor is that what we're particularly good
12 at. But we do count on you to keep us straight, to give
13 us good information and your best thoughts on how to
14 implement this program.

15 You'll have an opportunity to speak today. If
16 you are not signed up as a speaker, I suspect that
17 somebody in the front row up here is going to tell you
18 how to do that. You will also have an opportunity to
19 provide written commentary for a period of time after
20 this listening session. Again, I encourage you to do
21 that. And I encourage you to have your colleagues, who
22 couldn't be here in person, get your input in. We really

1 pay attention to it.

2 It's been our experience that you folks have a
3 much better view of how these programs are likely to
4 eventuate than we do. So, please, give us the benefit of
5 your very, very good thoughts.

6 Once again, it's my pleasure to welcome you.
7 I hope you have a very productive meeting this morning.
8 And we're looking forward to getting a lot of good
9 information. Thank you, Suresh.

10 DR. SURESHWARAN: Thanks, Dr. Otto. Good
11 morning.

12 (Good morning.)

13 DR. SURESHWARAN: On behalf of the Beginning
14 Farmers and Ranchers Development Program Team, I would
15 like to welcome all of you today to the public listening
16 session for the development of the program.

17 As Dr. Otto said, we are excited about this
18 new opportunity to develop another program that can
19 enhance you as agriculture and rural communities. We
20 look forward to working with all of you, and we thank you
21 for your support and participation in this effort.

22 Again, my name is Suresh. I'm a national

1 program leader in Community Programs. Jamie Hipp, a
2 national program leader in Economic Community Systems,
3 and I have been assigned to lead the team of national
4 program leaders from this agency who manage many similar
5 programs.

6 A description about all these different
7 programs was left on your chair. I think it is the last
8 page, it includes a description of various other programs
9 that are very similar, to some extent, to the Beginning
10 Farmers and Ranchers Development Program.

11 At this time I really wanted to introduce my
12 supervisors. I can see Dr. Frank Butler, deputy
13 administrator of Economic and Community Systems. And
14 Debbie Sheely was around. I think she's standing
15 behind. She's the deputy administrator for our
16 Competitive Programs.

17 In terms of the agenda for the rest of the
18 day, Jamie will begin by providing a brief overview of
19 the legislation. Following her presentation, we have set
20 aside time from 9:30 to about 12:45 to listen to
21 presentations from you. We have not set aside time for a
22 break, because we have to vacate this room around 1:00.

1 If you want to go to the restrooms, just go out towards
2 the guard's desk, turn left, and there are a couple of
3 restrooms on that side. And there is also a canteen over
4 there and there is some coffee here if you want some
5 coffee.

6 About seven or eight of you had called ahead
7 of time and asked for appointments to speak today. If
8 you want to speak, and if you haven't still signed in,
9 there is a sign-in sheet over there at the registration
10 desk, please feel free to sign in.

11 To give everyone an opportunity to speak, we
12 are going to limit the speakers to five minutes each. In
13 about four minutes time, Patricia will show this small
14 sign, and when it's five minutes it's red.

15 At the end, if we have additional time, we
16 might ask you to come forward. If you have any comments
17 that you want to share with us, feel free to do so.
18 Also, when you go back, I encourage you strongly to
19 submit written comments. You have time until November
20 14th. The address to send the written comments also was
21 put on your chair.

22 We have organized several other stakeholder

1 input sessions. A list of these sessions, including
2 webinars, teleconferences and -- telephone conferences
3 and stuff like that are kept on your chair. Feel free to
4 provide comments and encourage your other contacts to
5 provide comments for us. We really look forward to
6 hearing from you. Again, thank you for your support and
7 we look forward to a productive day.

8 One additional comment that has been pointed
9 out to me, we are being filmed today. I understand there
10 is a release form that you need to sign before you leave,
11 if you are going to make comments. If you don't want to
12 sign that sheet, please let us know so that they can stop
13 it. Yeah.

14 Are there any other quick questions before
15 Jamie starts?

16 DR. HIPPI: Hello, everyone, how are you?

17 (Good.)

18 DR. HIPPI: We're glad you're here. And before
19 I got -- launch off into a discussion of the legislation,
20 when you do stand up to make your comments, please be
21 sure and state clearly your name and your institution --
22 institutional affiliation, if you have one; or if you're

1 a producer, say that and tell us what you produce and so
2 on. We really would like to have a clear sense of who's
3 here and -- so we can have our reporter accurately
4 reflect what your comments were.

5 Can everybody hear me okay? Can you -- is
6 everybody -- okay.

7 The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development
8 Program, the 2008 Farm Bill in Section 7410 -- and you
9 will also see as a part of your -- the handouts on your
10 chair, that the actual legislation, you will -- that
11 legislation is a combination, really, of what was
12 reflected in the 2008 Farm Bill, which amended the 2002
13 Farm Bill, where this program was first authorized. And,
14 so, that legislation would not -- try to cut it apart and
15 put it in each Farm Bill, we tried to flow it as it was
16 intended by Congress. And, so, you have that to take
17 home with you and to take a look at while people are
18 talking and while we're talking.

19 The BFRDP Program has as its purpose,
20 competitive grants to provide programs and services for
21 beginning farmers and ranchers in the areas of training,
22 education, outreach, and technical assistance.

1 Now, that -- the '08 Farm Bill -- and as
2 amended -- as amending the 2002 Farm Bill -- provided us
3 the definition of the beginning farmer and rancher.
4 Those are individuals who have not operated a farm or
5 ranch, or who have operated for less than ten years.

6 Congress was very specific and outlined A
7 through R, in terms of programs and services that could
8 be funded through this program. These are indicated in
9 your handout, but we're going to all read through these
10 just very briefly so that you can be on the same page as
11 we are. Mentoring, apprenticeships and internships,
12 resources and referrals, assisting beginning farmers or
13 ranchers in acquiring land from retiring farmers and
14 ranchers, innovative farm and ranch transfer strategies,
15 entrepreneurship and business training, model land
16 leasing contracts, financial management training, whole
17 farm planning, conservation assistance, risk management
18 education, diversification in marketing strategies,
19 curriculum development, understanding the impact of
20 concentration and globalization, basic livestock and crop
21 farming practices, acquisition and management of
22 agricultural credit, environmental compliance,

1 information processing, and other similar subject areas
2 of use to beginning farmers and ranchers. So, you all
3 can see this program is very broad. Some of those topic
4 areas are broad in and of themselves. So, we're very
5 excited that it covers so many wonderful areas that
6 beginning farmers and ranchers can make use of.

7 The law also indicates that applicants shall
8 be a collaborative state, tribal, local, or regionally-
9 based network, or partnership of public or private
10 entities, which may include, state cooperative extension
11 service, federal, state, or tribal agencies, community-
12 based and nongovernmental organizations, colleges or
13 universities, including institutions awarding associate's
14 degrees, or foundations maintained by colleges or
15 universities, or any other appropriate partner as
16 determined by the secretary.

17 Priority is given in the law to partnerships
18 and collaborations that are led by or include
19 nongovernmental and community-based organizations, with
20 expertise in new agricultural producer training and
21 outreach. And farmers who are not beginning farmers and
22 ranchers are allowed to participate in the program, as

1 long as it does not detract from the primary purpose of
2 educating beginning farmers and ranchers.

3 The mandatory funding for the program is 18
4 million in FY '09, 19 million in each of the fiscal years
5 2010 and to 2012. An additional 30 million is authorized
6 to be appropriated for each of the fiscal years '08
7 through 12. The grants themselves, competitive grants,
8 can be up to three-year grants, in amounts no greater
9 than \$250,000 per year. And there is a matching
10 requirement of in-cash or in-kind contributions in an
11 amount equal to 25 percent of the funds provided by the
12 grant.

13 In addition, no less than 25 percent of the
14 BFRDP grant funds shall be used to support programs and
15 services addressing the needs of limited resource
16 beginning farmers and ranchers, socially disadvantaged
17 beginning farmers and ranchers, and farm workers desiring
18 to become farmers or ranchers.

19 The law also contemplates and creates
20 authorizing language for the creation of educational
21 teams to deal with curricula tailored to specific
22 audiences of beginning farmers and ranchers based on crop

1 or regional diversity. It creates the authorization for
2 curriculum and training clearing house online that makes
3 available to beginning farmers and ranchers education
4 curricula, and training materials, and programs. And the
5 law also does incorporate the idea of outcome-based
6 reporting of the efforts undertaken by funded projects
7 under the grant program.

8 Today we're having our official stakeholder
9 input session. We -- the comment period closes November
10 the 14th, which is a Friday. Again, we are going to have
11 a series of webinars, conference calls, e-mails, fax
12 capabilities, specifically during this two-week period.
13 But you know, as well as I do, if you've dealt with
14 CSREES, we accept stakeholder input all along the way, no
15 matter what. So, feel free to, you know, take a look at
16 those, commit them to memory and use them often,
17 particularly during this time period between now and
18 November the 14th.

19 We have been charged with release of the
20 request for applications, the initial RFA on this
21 program, in early January or sometime in January. Of
22 course there's a lot of mile markers that we have to go

1 through to get to that point. So, we are on an
2 aggressive schedule within our own agency to get this
3 done by January '09. And we are hopeful that that is
4 going to occur. Proposal deadline date would, if all
5 goes well and the RFA is released in January, would be in
6 March '09.

7 So, again, the meeting is being recorded and
8 will be transcribed, so, please speak clearly. Before
9 giving your comments, please let us know who and where
10 you're from. Use the mike. Speaking time has been
11 assigned in five-minute allotments as Suresh has
12 indicated. No break. We're just going to keep rolling
13 on. So, if you need a break, just feel free to -- in as
14 least disruptive manner as possible -- take a visit to
15 the canteen or to the restrooms down the hall.

16 Do we need to bring up another --

17 DR. SURESHWARAN: No, that's it.

18 DR. HIPPI: Okay. If you choose -- again, if
19 you choose not to have your comments recorded, please let
20 us know. But if you have no problem with that, he does
21 need a release for -- to be able to use those comments
22 later.

1 So, with that --

2 DR. SURESHWARAN: Any questions?

3 DR. HIPPI: Any questions?

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Will you make a copy of
5 the slides available?

6 DR. SURESHWARAN: There are a few copies of
7 the slides that we have kept that might be a slightly
8 older version, but it's there. The webinars will be
9 taped with all the slides -- the final slides, and it
10 will be posted on our website.

11 DR. HIPPI: If you'd like a copy between now
12 and then, just let Marietta know at the back table. We
13 can get those to you.

14 Any other questions?

15 We look forward to hearing from you.

16 DR. SURESHWARAN: I think we have a few more
17 minutes, so -- but we are going to go ahead. The first
18 speaker is Jamie Collins from Serendipity Farms.

19 JAMIE COLLINS: Hello. My name is Jamie
20 Collins, and my farm is Serendipity. I started my
21 certified organic vegetable farm in California seven
22 years ago on four acres. My farming partner, Roberto

1 Garcia (ph), and I are currently farming 45 acres and
2 over 50 different varieties of vegetables, herbs, and
3 berries, which are sold through farmer's markets,
4 community-supported agriculture programs, local
5 restaurants and markets, and also for long-distance
6 wholesale markets.

7 The past seven years building my business has
8 been very difficult, even with my well-rounded background
9 in sustainable farming. I have a bachelor's degree in
10 crop science from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, three years
11 experience as an assistant farm manager for a large
12 corporate organic farm. And I was the regional service
13 representative and organic farm inspector for California
14 Certified Organic Farmers for seven years.

15 When you decide you want to have a farm, you
16 are plunged into being a business owner, even if your
17 background or education is in growing plants. This was
18 the hardest part of being a farmer for me: Learning how
19 to keep and maintain financial documentation for loans,
20 creating a farm plan, establishing markets for my
21 product, which are never guaranteed from year-to-year,
22 learning how to manage a fluctuating cash flow, and to

1 invest in crop insurance.

2 One year we lost seven acres of heirloom
3 tomatoes to an early frost. I contacted my local farm
4 service agency to request crop loss funds. I was awarded
5 7,000 and told I would need to have crop insurance on my
6 tomatoes for the next season. The FSA told me that they
7 could actually -- that they could provide me with crop
8 insurance. But a few months later I received my -- a
9 letter with my check back stating that they don't ensure
10 organic tomatoes and that I would need to look elsewhere
11 for insurance. I had no idea where to look for crop
12 insurance and the FSA didn't have any information of
13 agencies that would ensure crops for me.

14 By the time I had located one that would
15 ensure organic tomatoes, I had missed the sign-up
16 deadline. And because I did not have proof of my crop
17 being ensured for that season, the FSA requested that I
18 payback the 7,000 with interest.

19 This is one instance where I definitely did
20 not feel supported or given information that could have
21 prevented me from missing the deadline. I don't feel
22 there is enough information or education for new farmers

1 in order for them to be successful.

2 There are also other important areas that new
3 farmers struggle with, such as post-harvest handling,
4 packing product for wholesale markets, quality growing
5 techniques, how to become certified organic, rules and
6 regulations for agriculture, and planning for consecutive
7 harvest.

8 There is also a big gap between organic
9 education and information for farmers in the increasing
10 demand for organic food in the country. As an organic
11 inspector I saw 98 percent of the new young farmers not
12 make it through the second season. Who's going to grow
13 our food if we can't encourage the younger generation
14 that farming is a viable career choice?

15 Organic farming has a high payoff for creating
16 a new generation of successful farmers, particularly in
17 terms of economic benefits, not to mention environmental
18 benefits. The overwhelming majority of beginning farmers
19 surveyed by California FarmLink shows that they are
20 committed to farming the land organically. And it's been
21 my own personal experience that the organic food I grow
22 has a much greater market than conventional food.

1 Organic beginning farmers often have to go it
2 alone. In my own experience, I went to an ag college
3 that had no classes or education for organic agriculture,
4 only conventional agriculture. The BFRDP can help close
5 this gap by prioritizing grants for beginning organic
6 farmer training programs.

7 I also believe that, when making funding
8 decisions, organic farming should be recognized as a
9 viable, economic opportunity for aspiring farmers, and
10 for the environmental and conservation stewardship of the
11 land. I also believe the funds should be awarded to
12 nonprofit and community-based organizations that have
13 been spearheading organic research education and
14 supporting new farmers for many years.

15 The groups with the experience know what the
16 local farmers need and have the infrastructure and
17 education to hit the ground running, providing useful
18 services to farmers who need it. I have been helped by
19 many of these groups over the years. A few example is a
20 beneficial habitat and pollinator row for biological pest
21 control and many others.

22 Thank you so much for your time. And thank

1 you for providing the funds to help us out. Thank you.

2 DR. SURESHWARAN: The next one is Jeremy from
3 Organic Farming Research Foundation.

4 JEREMY BARKER-PLOTKIN: Hi. My name is Jeremy
5 Barker-Plotkin. I run Simple Gifts Farm in Amherst,
6 Massachusetts. I grow about 12 acres of certified
7 organic vegetables, which I sell through a community-
8 supported agriculture and at the farmer's market.

9 I learned how to farm as an adult, pretty much
10 starting from when I was in college. And I've also
11 taught apprentices at my farm. Some -- many of them have
12 gone on to start their own farm businesses. So, I think
13 I'm representative of the population that this program is
14 trying to reach.

15 I wanted to address a couple categories of
16 barriers to farming that I've come across, and that I've
17 seen other people come up against.

18 The first is kind of the technical skills
19 behind building a farm business. And then the second,
20 which I think is a thornier issue, is access to land,
21 capital, and equipment, which are all kind of tied
22 together.

1 In the area of technical skills, I think it's
2 important to recognize that farmers are the ones that
3 have the knowledge and that have these technical skills.
4 So, proposals which encourage farmer-to-farmer knowledge
5 transfer I think are very important, things like
6 apprenticeships, farmer-to-farmer mentoring. Also places
7 where young farmers can practice farming in a more safe
8 environment, such as student-run farms or incubator
9 sites.

10 For myself the mere -- just the fact of taking
11 the responsibility for a farm operation was really where
12 a lot of the learning came in. I -- you know, I may have
13 known a lot of how to farm, the technical aspects, but
14 putting it altogether into one thing was a great learning
15 experience. So, within the technical skills, I guess,
16 stressing that farmer-to-farmer knowledge transfer.

17 The access to land capital and equipment is
18 really a difficult hurdle for people getting into
19 farming, just how to jump from being an apprentice or
20 working on someone's farm and then how to get the
21 equipment or land that you need.

22 In the area where I live -- and I think this

1 is true across the country in a lot of places -- the
2 development pressure has made it really difficult to be
3 able to afford land, and especially for farmers to buy
4 land outright. I farm on land which is owned by a land
5 trust and I lease the land. And I think alternative land
6 tenure models like that are an important way to get
7 farmers on land.

8 One of the things I've run across, is that
9 it's hard for -- I've worked with Farm Service Agency for
10 some of the -- my capital needs, and I -- it's hard for
11 lenders, and FSA, and other outfits, it's hard for them
12 to recognize that kind of land tenure arrangement. I
13 don't have this big asset of owning farmland that they
14 can use on my balance sheet. So, I think that it would
15 be important to stress programs which encourage and hook
16 farmers up, educate farmers, and also service providers
17 about alternative land tenure arrangements, and also
18 lenders as well.

19 Other things that can help in that access to
20 land capital equipment, equipment-sharing programs among
21 farmers in a given area, incubator sites, again,
22 revolving loan funds, connecting young farmers with the

1 Farm Service Administration and other programs that USDA
2 runs. Just as Jamie noted, providing information about
3 how people can access those programs effectively.

4 Because it's -- the -- it's sometimes a little bit
5 overwhelming to figure out the -- how to get on that.

6 I guess a final point I wanted to make, was
7 that the organic local direct marketed segment of the
8 farm economy is a growing segment. In the ten years that
9 I've been farming, I've seen a steady increase in
10 interest in that, and new farmers wanting to get into
11 it. And particularly this year, with a jump in land
12 prices -- or in food prices, and oil, and climate change,
13 and all this stuff that's going on, there's been a huge
14 jump just this year in that -- in interest. So, I think
15 that that is a segment that's very accessible to starting
16 farmers as a growing segment of the population. So, I
17 think it would be important that reviewers -- grant
18 reviewers would have experience within that segment of
19 the farm economy. So, thank you, very much.

20 DR. SURESHWARAN: The next person who has
21 signed up is Caroline from American Forest Foundation.

22 CAROLINE KUEBLER: Good morning. My name is

1 Caroline Kuebler and I'm the outreach manager for the
2 American Forest Foundation. Thank you. Thank you for
3 the opportunity to comment on the implementation of the
4 Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. I am
5 here today representing the American Forest Foundation
6 and its network of over 90,000 family forest owners,
7 conservation partners, and environmental educators, who
8 strive to create a future where North American forest
9 continue to provide social, economic, and environmental
10 benefits to our communities, our nation, and our world.

11 Like farmers, family forest owners are aging.
12 One-third of the 4.4 million family forest owners are 65
13 years or older. These families want to pass their land
14 on to the next generation in their family, or to a new
15 owner who will continue in the business of conserving
16 these natural resources, and supplying the nation with
17 food, feed, fiber, energy, wood products, and other
18 environmental services.

19 Seeing the great potential for this program to
20 address some of the biggest challenges facing family
21 forest owners, the foundation offers the following points
22 for your consideration in the development of the

1 program's rules. Initiatives targeting the next
2 generation of family forest owners should be eligible for
3 funding under this program, just as those targeting
4 traditional farmers and ranchers. Partnerships are
5 critical to achieving the goals of this program.
6 Projects with strong partnerships with existing landowner
7 networks should be given high priority.

8 Strong accountability and performance measures
9 should be required to ensure the program is achieving
10 desired results. Education teams should also include a
11 focus on curricula programs and workshops geared to
12 family forest owners.

13 Given the large number of family forest
14 owners, and the number of aging owners, priority should
15 be given on initiatives that assist family forest owners
16 with intergenerational transfer.

17 Family forest owners own a large expanse of
18 the rural landscape. These lands are critical to
19 conserving our natural resources, supporting jobs, and
20 economies in rural communities, just like traditional
21 farm and ranch lands. Helping forest owners pass their
22 land, or helping new owners purchase land is critical to

1 maintaining the rural way of life.

2 It is also important to note that USDA's
3 existing department-wide regulation on beginning farmers
4 and ranchers from August of 2006 includes landowners who
5 have wood lots and forest.

6 It is consistent with departmental policy to
7 include initiatives aimed at family forest owners in the
8 Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program;
9 therefore, we urge you to explicitly state that family
10 forest owners and initiatives focused on these owners are
11 eligible for assistance through this program.

12 It is clear Congress intended this program to
13 utilize existing networks to reach landowners. The
14 American Tree Farm System, a program of the American
15 Forest Foundation, is the largest forest-owner network in
16 the country, with over 90,000 owners who own and manage
17 24-million acres of forest. The Tree Farm System is
18 designed to help these families manage their land and
19 keep it in the family.

20 These landowners are critical for neighbor-to-
21 neighbor efforts where forest owners convey messages to
22 other forest owners on topics, such as starting up the

1 forest business, or getting help with estate planning.

2 The foundation believes strongly in
3 accountability and performance-based approaches to
4 program management. Key performance measures for family
5 forest initiatives could include outcomes such as the
6 number of landowners who have taken significant steps
7 towards sustainable management of their forest, or number
8 of landowners who have a plan to pass on their land to a
9 beginning forest owner.

10 It is important to note, that while family
11 forest owners face many of the same challenges as farmers
12 and ranchers, the nature of managing a forest -- whether
13 it's contracting the forest professionals, or setting up
14 accounting systems to track finances -- is very different
15 than farming. Thus, it is important that education teams
16 are set up to develop curricula, programs, and workshops
17 targeting forest owners, as well as farmers and ranchers.

18 Funding priorities should be focused on
19 addressing this issue, assisting forest owners with
20 intergenerational transfer, as well as assisting new or
21 potential family forest owners with the purchase and
22 sustainable management of forest land. As you can see,

1 there is much potential for this program to help with
2 some of the biggest challenges facing family forest
3 owners. The agency would be investing in efforts that
4 ultimately help to conserve a large portion of nation's
5 forest and the rural communities that rely on them. We
6 look forward to working with you as you implement this
7 program. And thank you for the opportunity to comment.

8 DR. SURESHWARAN: We have about 20 minutes
9 till the next topic on partnerships. If there is anyone
10 else who want to make comments on any other topic,
11 please, feel free to come forward. Any other topic is
12 fine.

13 The topics that we give -- the different
14 topics were just a guide. And it's very flexible.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You want to start on
16 with the next slide?

17 DR. SURESHWARAN: Yeah. Come. Yeah.

18 KENT SCHESCKE: Good morning. My name is Kent
19 Schescke. I'm with the National FFA Organization. Oh,
20 move the mike up so I can -- thank you.

21 Good morning. My name is Kent Schescke. I'm
22 with the National FFA Organization, National FFA

1 Foundation. It's a pleasure to be here and bring some
2 thoughts and ideas about the New Beginning Farmer
3 Program. I'm very excited about this. I had the
4 opportunity to visit with secretary -- at that time
5 Secretary Johanns having hearings on this before Congress
6 enacted it. And it's something that we felt that could
7 be a tremendous benefit.

8 I want to give you a little overview of the
9 audience that we serve today. Basically we are a school-
10 based program. Basically the strength of our program is
11 grades 9th through 12th. I'm here really today
12 representing the National Council for Ag Education, which
13 really is the overall system of school-based agriculture
14 education, starting all the way from middle school
15 through adult programs. Today our programs in
16 agriculture education serve students at the middle
17 school, high school, post secondary -- and when I say
18 "post secondary" primarily focused at two-year community
19 colleges, as well as adult education.

20 Altogether we serve an audience of about a
21 million students who have an interest in pursuing
22 agriculture careers. 507,000 of those students at the

1 secondary level are members of the National FFA
2 Organization. We work with a network of about 11,000
3 agriculture teachers, basically teachers who are trained
4 in agriculture, primarily at agriculture colleges and
5 through our land grant universities, and are certified to
6 teach. We work in about 7,500 schools. And this would
7 be a combination of middle school, high school, and post-
8 secondary colleges. FFA is a national federation,
9 basically, made up of 52 state associations, 50 states,
10 plus Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

11 Our curriculum is based around the science,
12 business, and technology of agriculture, food, and
13 natural resources. A little bit of history, we were
14 actually enacted through the -- an act in 1917 that set
15 up agricultural education programs in public high
16 schools. 1928 the National FFA Organization was formed,
17 has grown over that time. We are a federally-charted
18 organization, and actually have -- our federal authority
19 to exist comes through the Department of Education,
20 through the Office of Vocational Adult Education.

21 We've worked very closely with USDA on a
22 number of programs. In fact, as recently as three days

1 ago Secretary Schaffer signed into effect a new
2 memorandum of understanding between the National FFA and
3 the National FFA Foundation, really creating a framework
4 for our continued working relationship and cooperation.

5 We just celebrated our 81st National FFA
6 Convention, with having almost 55,000 young people, and
7 adults, teachers, and parents present. And, interesting,
8 in agriculture that is actually the largest youth
9 convention in the United States.

10 There is really three components to our
11 program that I think have implication to it here. And
12 you might think of these as three interconnected
13 circles. The first one starts with classroom
14 laboratory. For students to be involved in FFA, they
15 have to be enrolled in some type of classroom setting,
16 whether it's a teacher of agriculture instructs them, and
17 on the science business technology, across broad areas of
18 agriculture production, agriculture, and a lot of the
19 related areas.

20 And the second part, I think this gets a
21 little even closer, is what we call supervised
22 agriculture experience. All of our students are

1 encouraged, and in many cases required, to have a
2 supervised agriculture experience program. For many of
3 these students, those programs tend to be ownership, or
4 entrepreneurial in nature; and for those students who are
5 planning to go into production agriculture, help form the
6 basis of what can eventually become their farming
7 operation. And these are supervised by a teacher on an
8 on-going basis. Most of our teachers are on extended
9 employment. They work with students year round.

10 The third part being the FFA Organization,
11 which really provides the motivation and the connecting
12 components that help reinforce and motivate student's
13 desires in these areas.

14 For many years we have worked with USDA. We
15 really -- and when working with a lot of agencies, we try
16 to offer educational instructional materials as a form of
17 the outreach that they are trying to do around their
18 programs. A few of those examples include -- we work
19 with Farm Service Agency as it relates to a recognition
20 of our outstanding young people who are starting in
21 production agriculture. We work with Rural Development
22 in the area of ag entrepreneurship. We work with the

1 Risk Management Agency to help students increase their
2 knowledge, and understanding, and application of risk
3 management strategies. We work with NRCS and
4 Environmental National Resources Management in helping
5 students become more knowledgeable and better stewards of
6 natural resources.

7 We have worked with AFAS, as it relates to the
8 National Animal Identification Program. We work with
9 CSRE enrolled youth grants.

10 I'm mostly here today representing the
11 National FFA Foundation, basically made up of 2,000
12 contributing agencies, of which half of those are
13 probably agribusiness. I think, in working through this
14 program, we have the opportunity to leverage lots of
15 resources and expertise, and help students -- connect
16 students with resources that will hopefully make them
17 successful as agriculture producers.

18 Our goal is to increase the number of our
19 programs over the next seven years, from about 7,500 to
20 10,000. And we believe this will create -- increase
21 access to students who are interested in agriculture. It
22 will also serve as a way to help motivate.

1 In addition to the technical resources and
2 training, helping encourage and motivate students to that
3 end is very important. And I think that's a role that
4 our agriculture teachers, the 11,000 teachers play an
5 important role of working with students over many of
6 years to help them be successful in their career,
7 especially for those that aspire to go into production
8 agriculture. Thank you, very much.

9 DR. SURESHWARAN: Thank you. Let's go on with
10 the rest of the presentations. The next one I'm sure --
11 I know he's here.

12 ADAM WARTHESEN: Good morning. My name is
13 Adam Warthesen. I work with the Land Stewardship
14 Project. The Land Stewardship Project is a sustainable
15 agriculture organization based in Minnesota with members
16 throughout the Upper Midwest.

17 The Land Stewardship Project has been working
18 on farm and rural issues for about 26 years. And two of
19 the areas that we focus in, one is in policy and
20 organizing at the federal level, obviously here and in
21 the state and local level in Minnesota. And another
22 program that we offer is our Farm Beginnings Program.

1 It's a ten-month course for farmers. And now it's
2 running in its 12th year. The program includes monthly
3 classes, and on-farm workshops, mentoring opportunities.
4 And we've had about 350 beginning farmers graduate from
5 the program. And about 60 percent of those are actively
6 farming right now. It's also a licensed program, Farm
7 Beginnings is, in about six different states that are
8 running it right now.

9 During the Farm Bill debate, our organization
10 was heavily engaged in working to advance the Beginning
11 Farmer and Rancher Development Program. You know, our
12 members and staff took lead roles in coalitions, in
13 testimony, in working closely with members of Congress,
14 such as Collin Peterson, Tim Wahls, Stephanie Herseth-
15 Sandlin, and also Senator Harkin, to see reauthorization,
16 and for the first time ever, dedicated, mandatory
17 funding.

18 We are pleased to see the program designated
19 to CSREES. We know you have a track record of working
20 with community organizations. And we want to complement
21 you on the prompt implementation of the program, and a
22 hopeful RFA by mid-January.

1 In preparation for the program, over the last
2 six months the Land Stewardship Project has been meeting
3 with different organizations across the country. We met
4 with about 15 organizations coast-to-coast. And our
5 visits have really focused on, how can this program work
6 optimally for those community-based Beginning Farmer
7 Programs and the communities they serve? How do we build
8 effective programs? How do we leverage community
9 support?

10 And while different styles and scope of how
11 people go about doing their programs, one consistent
12 message I'd say we heard is that there is definitely
13 demand for this program.

14 Today I'm just going to comment on successful
15 partnerships and collaborations, some funding priorities,
16 and if I have an opportunity, the administration of the
17 program itself.

18 In our experience of -- both in the operation
19 of our own Land Stewardships Program and what we've heard
20 from people around the country, is that successful
21 partnerships are often those led by community-based
22 organizations that are able to then engage and reach out

1 to partners, such as banks, and co-ops, and land grants,
2 and extension, and the local and state colleges, to build
3 real successful programs. But what we found is it's
4 really key to have that community involvement in leading
5 those partnerships.

6 Regarding funding priorities, I thought what
7 Jamie had originally put up there and mentioned, we
8 thought Congress was really clear in saying the secretary
9 shall give priority to partnerships and collaborations --
10 and we think this is key -- that are led by or include
11 nongovernment or community-based organization. And the
12 other piece that was key in this is, that have expertise
13 in new agriculture producer training and outreach.

14 We encourage CSREES to prioritize proposals
15 where those applicants have a proven track record in new
16 agriculture producer training. By identifying those
17 proposals that can and have demonstrated or quantified
18 factors, such as how many activities are they carrying
19 out? How many participants or graduates of a program
20 have they produced or will they produce? The number of
21 years that a program has been offered, or other
22 accomplishments, we think CSREES will be ensuring that we

1 see effective beginning farmer efforts supported through
2 this. We don't need to reinvent the wheel, but we do
3 want to bring also on new beginning farmer efforts. And,
4 so, this is a good lens to help us figure out, how do we
5 bring in those new programs as well?

6 In addition, we encourage CSREES to place a
7 priority on the greater level of direct interaction with
8 existing farmers and new farmers. So, programs that do
9 more face-to-face, that have higher frequencies of farm
10 field days, workshops, one-to-one assistance, those seem
11 to be, and what we've heard, are really successful in
12 helping sustain farmers through the long term.

13 Regarding the administration of BFRDP, we
14 believe that there is cause for CSREES to designate
15 substantial staff time and resources to field inquiries
16 from groups interested in applying for the program. As a
17 new program, we suspect you'll get a number of calls.
18 And we think that's important that you dedicate time to
19 figure out how to help those folks move forward in it.

20 Regarding the RFA, once it is open for sign
21 ups, we encourage at least a 60-day period until the
22 application deadline, as groups are looking into the

1 program.

2 And last of all, you know, this program has an
3 opportunity for -- really to bring in a new crop of
4 agriculture producers. And we're excited about seeing it
5 move forward. You know, there is growth in farming, in
6 local markets, in organics that we've heard, in energy
7 crops, in alternative livestock production. And we
8 really think that those are some of the places that
9 agriculture is growing and that we should maximize with
10 this program.

11 Thank you for the opportunity to comment. And
12 I'll be here later today. We look forward to also
13 submitting comments before the November deadline.

14 DR. SURESHWARAN: The next is Aimee from
15 Sustainable Agriculture.

16 AIMEE WITTEMAN: Good morning. My name is
17 Aimee Witteman. And I'm here speaking on behalf of the
18 Sustainable Agriculture Coalition.

19 The Sustainable Agriculture Coalition is a
20 national alliance of grassroots, family farm,
21 conservation, and rural development organizations that
22 identify and promote federal policies that are equitable,

1 encourage environmental stewardship fostered in new
2 markets, and increase access to healthy foods.

3 Over the last 20 years, SAC has also been one
4 of the leading national coalitions to advocate and win
5 federal farm -- federal programs that advance beginning
6 farmers and ranchers. We are very pleased to be here
7 today. I want to thank CSREES for the opportunity to
8 offer comments at this listening session.

9 With the average farmer around 62 years of
10 age, and millions of acres of good farmland hanging in
11 the balance, as this generation looks toward retirement,
12 programs like the BFRDP, which will help the next
13 generation get a foot hold into farming livelihoods are
14 vital. But the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
15 believes certain sectors of agriculture carry more
16 promise than others. Growing consumer demand for
17 organic, pest or based livestock, and locally produced
18 agricultural products, which carry with them
19 environmental as well as public health benefits,
20 represent an exciting market opportunity for new
21 farmers. These markets are also the kind that a majority
22 of new farmers want to access. We encourage the program

1 leaders to consider the growing market and other benefits
2 of sustainable agriculture production, as you administer
3 the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program.

4 We also encourage program administrators to
5 adopt a structure of agricultural perspective as you
6 evaluate grant proposals. We would like to see program
7 leaders and members of the review panel evaluate whether
8 proposals for BFRDP grants will increase farming
9 opportunities that promote a relatively secure
10 livelihood, while also not diminishing the farming
11 opportunities of others.

12 For instance, in recent years companies with
13 preferential access to credit and markets have been
14 establishing industrial scale livestock operations in
15 several regions of the United States, especially in the
16 south. While essentially creating new opportunities for
17 farmers for those who are entering into grower contracts,
18 these operations diminish farming opportunities for
19 independent livestock producers in the region. These
20 types of operations are also high -- also include high
21 production expenses and mortgage payments and can be
22 relatively risky for beginning farmers.

1 Risks are inherent to agriculture, but we
2 encourage you to evaluate proposals for the kinds of
3 agricultural systems that they are preparing beginning
4 farmers for, and the impact that these systems have on
5 the land, and the local, and regional economy, including
6 other farmers in the area.

7 The fastest growing population of new farmers
8 is Latino. As such it is important that the BFRDP states
9 -- statutes stipulates, as Jamie showed, that not less
10 than 25 percent of funds each fiscal year address the
11 needs of limited resource and socially disadvantaged
12 farmers.

13 We would like to draw your attention to the
14 managers statement, which clarifies that socially
15 disadvantaged is intended to include immigrant beginning
16 farmers and ranchers as well. The BFRDP legislation is
17 also the only place in the Farm Bill that sets aside
18 funding for farm workers who want to become full-time
19 farmers and ranchers. This population is also included
20 in that 25 percent set aside.

21 To help ensure that BFRDP is funding projects
22 that address the various needs of those who qualify as

1 socially disadvantaged, limited resource, or farm workers
2 who are transitioning to full-time farm -- being full-
3 time farmers and ranchers, it is imperative that the
4 review panel include representatives who have a history
5 of serving those populations.

6 We encourage program leaders to consider the
7 BFRDP as part of a larger portfolio of USDA programs that
8 address the needs of beginning farmers and ranchers, and
9 to look for and evaluate and elevate the linkages between
10 those programs.

11 For example, program leaders could encourage
12 applicants to demonstrate how they will make FSA borrower
13 trainings a condition for graduating from a beginning
14 farmer program that they are administering. You might
15 also consider in your materials and in the clearing
16 house, providing links and information about other USDA
17 programs. The farmers today spoke to that need, to
18 navigate the programs, and credit conservation, risk
19 management, and research that serve beginning farmers.

20 We also think it is in your interest to ensure
21 that the new office of advocacy and outreach, which is
22 intended to improve coordination between USDA programs

1 that serve beginning farmers and ranchers, including
2 BFRDP, is established, and that someone with a history of
3 effectiveness, leadership, and experience with beginning
4 and socially disadvantaged farmer populations is
5 appointed director.

6 And then, finally, while not comprehensive,
7 there's much curriculum and other educational materials
8 out there for beginning farmers and ranchers. Rather
9 than recreate the wheel, during the first grant cycle we
10 encourage you to award one or two scoping proposals for
11 an educational team to pull together existing curriculum
12 and to perform a gap analysis. Then in the following
13 grant cycles, grants for curriculum development can be
14 awarded in a way that focuses in on those gaps.

15 We think an online clearing house for this
16 information is important, but, again, there isn't -- you
17 may not need to recreate the wheel. We encourage you to
18 save resources and think about using existing platforms,
19 such as the ATRA website, which already attracts a large
20 number of beginning farmers. Thank you.

21 DR. SURESHWARAN: Steve from California
22 FarmLink.

1 STEVE SCHWARTZ: Hi. Good morning. Eighteen
2 hours ago I was selling mushrooms at the farmer's market
3 in my town about an hour north of San Francisco, so,
4 forgive me if I sound a little tired.

5 The -- I started advocating on behalf of this
6 program in 2002. And there are other people in the room
7 here that did a lot more work on it since then. But
8 we're -- I can say for all of us, that we're really
9 excited to be at this point and seeing an RFP coming out
10 in a couple of months. And I'd also say, from what I can
11 tell, everyone around the country is excited about the
12 way that the program leaders have started off this
13 process in listening in for input from farmers and the
14 advocates around the country. I want to say a couple of
15 comments about California FarmLinks history of delivering
16 services to beginning farmers, and a couple of
17 recommendations for next steps to make sure that we all
18 make the most of this opportunity to have a success. And
19 for me a success with the Beginning Farmer and Rancher
20 Development Program would mean that the programs that
21 have been serving beginning farmers are empowered to
22 continue these programs at a larger level and more

1 effectively.

2 Also, we want to build the capacity of
3 movement. I'm a founding member of the National Farmer
4 Transition Network, which now International Farm
5 Transition Network. And I've seen groups in the last ten
6 years come and go, some -- you know, all struggling for
7 funding, and many not being able to carry on because of
8 lack of funding.

9 But a third element of success, I believe, is
10 demonstrating to -- demand for the program to members of
11 Congress. So, we're balancing those different types of
12 things.

13 A little bit about California FarmLink, we
14 focus on land tenure. We have a database of beginning
15 farmers looking to lease or buy land. There's about 600
16 beginning farmers in our database now, about 200
17 landowners looking to lease land out, some want to sell.
18 And we facilitate connections between the two to ensure
19 their secure tenure agreements.

20 We also provide technical assistance.
21 Technical assistance in the last four years, we've
22 reached about 1,400 individuals. And through -- well,

1 1,400 sessions of technical assistance. And our
2 technical assistance recipients are about 30 percent
3 minority farmers and about 30 percent women farmers.

4 Trainings, we've done -- in the last year we
5 did 16 workshops serving 400 individuals. We train
6 people on business planning, financial literacy,
7 succession planning. What we don't do is talk to people
8 about how to grow a crop. That's -- we work with people
9 who are already committed to entrepreneurial agriculture,
10 want to be their own boss, and we help them take the next
11 step, in terms of business planning and securing tenure.

12 So, in terms of, how do we reach people? We
13 work with county farm bureaus. We work with -- we have a
14 newsletter reaching 2,700 people. We do advocacy on
15 Hmong radio in a couple of counties. We work with
16 grassroots groups like ALBA that was mentioned earlier
17 today, and Lumien (ph) Community in Sacramento. We --
18 what we don't do is do outreach to teens that are ten
19 years from -- away from making the decision to be in
20 their own independent agricultural entrepreneur. In the
21 last year we've reached over 15,000 individuals with
22 direct mailings through these partnerships, and also many

1 more through public media.

2 We have a loan fund, which we've developed
3 over the last few years. We've now -- we have
4 partnerships with Bravo Bank, Wells Fargo, Calvert, and
5 other partners. We put together a loan fund of \$1.4
6 million. And what we do, is we make loans up to \$100,000
7 to beginning farmers that are -- have land tenure, have
8 experience, but would otherwise have a difficult time
9 getting financing from the farm credit system, from
10 private banks, and from other sources. And the reason we
11 can make a loan to them, is because we have technical
12 assistance that support -- that is supported by
13 foundation grants or other sources of funding.

14 Let's see. So, partnerships -- so, great
15 opportunity here. Again, our partners now are Land
16 Trust, Grassroots Farmer Organizations, Co-op Extension,
17 private banks, USDRMA Outreach has supported us, as well
18 as the SAR Program. But those programs don't fund land
19 linking work, and they don't fund program funding for
20 savings match for our Individual Development Account
21 Program, which I think some people have heard of. It's a
22 match-savings program where the beginning farmer puts

1 \$100 in the bank every -- every month for two years, and
2 we match it with \$300 a month every month for two years.
3 At the end of those two years they have a down payment on
4 land, or money towards a tractor. But at the end of the
5 day, the money may be less important than the -- during
6 those two years we're working with them to make sure
7 they're filing taxes as a farmer, doing business
8 planning, cleaning up their credit, doing the things that
9 position themselves -- position them to be an attractive
10 loan candidate.

11 And, again, there's -- no USDA program will
12 fund savings match for that. So, that's one of the
13 things that we want to see more support for. I'm going
14 to go back to that in a minute.

15 But I echo some of the comments earlier about,
16 I want to see these partnerships have a important role
17 for this community-based organizations, and nonprofits,
18 and that it will be applying for funds for this program.
19 I recognize, you know, wearing the national farm
20 transition network hat there's some great programs, like
21 New York FarmLink out of -- it's connected to the Co-op
22 Extension at the -- there. And Wisconsin has a great

1 program through the Department of Agriculture.

2 But as your -- as we're developing criteria
3 for judging proposals, I think it's essential that we
4 look at minimizing overhead and we don't want to see 40
5 or 50 percent indirect rates. And I think that's
6 something that, you know, program staff can be pushed on
7 from USDA. Say, hey, on this one you're not going to be
8 able to get away with 40 percent interactor (ph)
9 overhead. And I encourage you all to just determine how
10 far you can push that issue over the next couple of
11 months.

12 In terms of -- again, with the NFTN, I see,
13 you know -- I'll take another minute here -- or 45
14 seconds. I see a lot of programs that would be -- are
15 well-positioned to take advantage of a grant of 250,000 a
16 year for three years in a row. But there's others that
17 they're not quite there yet. And helping -- I think one
18 way that I could see this going, is groups that have more
19 experience mentoring less experienced groups -- like
20 Oregon is starting a FarmLink group right now, and I know
21 there's others coming up around the country -- they could
22 be a subgrantee to an experienced group in the first

1 year; and second year out they could go in with a full
2 proposal when they're ready to run with it. I think
3 that's -- that would be something I'd hope BFRDP would
4 make sure there's room for.

5 Asset building strategies, don't forget the
6 manager's report. When I read asset building strategies,
7 I hear the program is eligible to support individual
8 development accounts. And, again, there's no one else --
9 no other program in USDA right now can -- has funding to
10 do that. So, it's very important.

11 In terms of outcomes, we want to look at
12 family farms maintained in ag production. We want to
13 look at solid land tenure agreements, mentorships, jobs
14 created, revenue increased on the -- for the farmers
15 being assisted. We want to see land kept in
16 agriculture. And we want to see partnerships that
17 leverage resources.

18 So, I'm looking forward to the rest of the
19 conversation. Thank you.

20 DR. SURESHWARAN: John from Custom Ag
21 Solutions.

22 JOHN MANGUS: My name is John Mangus with

1 Custom Ag Solutions. We're a Wyoming based small
2 for-profit business. And we have a special expertise in
3 the development and delivery of education programs for
4 agriculture producers, with a special emphasis on
5 beginning producers. We have previously worked on more
6 than two dozen USDA risk management agency education
7 partnerships involving numerous public and private
8 partners.

9 The activities of our current and past
10 partnerships have been directed toward a wide range of
11 traditional and beginning producers in dozens of states.
12 Over the past four years CAS has delivered presentations
13 to beginning producers in over 200 locations, across nine
14 different states, reaching well over 3,000 participants.
15 And we've also worked with CSREES on some -- on an NRI
16 project to reach -- to benefit small, medium-sized farms.

17 We strongly support the goals of the Beginning
18 Farmer and Rancher Development Program. In our work we
19 observe the -- the degrading of America, also translates
20 to the grain of the American farmer and rancher. And as
21 a nation we need policies that will help facilitate the
22 efficient, equitable, and successful transition of

1 productive farm and ranch assets to the next generation
2 of producers. So, we appreciate the efforts of your
3 organization, your agency here, to administer this
4 program, to solicit feedback. It's a very positive sign
5 to see that.

6 In our work with beginning producers, and we
7 work a lot with FFA -- and I really echo a lot of what's
8 been said. I think there's been great feedback so far.
9 We work with a lot of FFA teachers, vo ag teachers all
10 over the nation, as I said. And a consistent theme that
11 we hear back from them, is that the producer -- these
12 young producers -- the beginning producers do not have
13 solid business, economic fundamentals that they really
14 need. That that is the one place they're lacking. They
15 have some of these other -- they can go out, they know
16 how to go out and plant the crops, harvest them, but
17 lacking on the business side, the economics, the
18 marketing. And, so, the targets that are set up here are
19 really -- I think they're right on, in terms of how to
20 obtain land, some of the leasing, and ownership
21 questions, helping them to understand that. Agricultural
22 credit is a huge deal. To give you an idea, the local

1 farm -- and our principles within our company are
2 producers, ranchers in the Wyoming and Montana area. So,
3 we know -- I went to a bank probably two weeks ago just
4 to check out where -- what the status of our loan was,
5 make sure everything was all right. And they actually
6 said, we're keeping good customers, we're turning away
7 bad ones, and we're not taking on any new ones. Now,
8 hopefully that will loosen up, but that's, you know, the
9 reality for some producers. So, the targets are -- seem
10 to be the right targets.

11 I want to emphasize that creative efforts are
12 necessary to reach the targeted audience of beginning
13 producers. You could have direct instruction. You could
14 have web-based instruction. However you're -- and really
15 the success is where you find it, but there needs to be
16 measurable outcomes with this. How many people did you
17 reach? And I'm echoing some of what we've already
18 heard. But there needs to be measurable -- how many
19 people did you reach? If you have the greatest program
20 in the world and nobody heard it, it doesn't matter.

21 There is also -- we found great success in
22 partnering with regional entities, such as farm bureau

1 organizations, FFA extension. If you can deliver this
2 content at events that are already scheduled, planned,
3 and being conducted, you're going to have a lot more
4 success than if you just put an ad in the paper and say,
5 we're going to have something for beginning producers.
6 It's really challenging to get them there. If it's an
7 existing event where you have partners, it's very
8 important.

9 And then as a final point, we ask the
10 administrators to facilitate the involvement of private
11 enterprise in the development and delivery of this
12 program. Private enterprise and small businesses
13 specifically offer advantages over more traditional
14 educational outlets, such as extension services in
15 universities. Specifically they're commonly more nimble,
16 more efficient, and very results oriented. And whether
17 that's for-profit or some of the community base not-for
18 profits, the smaller entities, you certainly aren't going
19 to see the 40 percent overhead rates -- overhead rates that
20 -- you know, we partner. We partner with large
21 universities and sometimes we just have to kind of walk
22 away from the partnership when we find out that the

1 mother ship is going to take, you know, 40 percent of
2 that. So, if there's a way to keep that down, I think
3 it's very effective.

4 But at a bottom line and to sum up, we need to
5 find ways to get that -- the productive agricultural
6 assets into this next generation. We have an old saying
7 in Wyoming, the only way to get a ranch is the womb, the
8 tomb, or the crypt -- or the alter, I mean, the tomb is
9 the crypt. The womb, the tomb, or the alter. And that
10 shouldn't be the way it is. And we have found ways to
11 make it so that -- to show producers the path in case
12 they don't have one of those three avenues available.
13 Thank you.

14 DR. SURESHWARAN: Jim from AFAC.

15 JIM WORSTELL: Well, good morning and
16 congratulations on getting this program started. I'm
17 here representing two nonprofit organizations, Arkansas
18 Farm Community Alliance, and Delta Land and Community.
19 And I just want to mention today two topics, markets and
20 mentoring. Every time I've seen non-farmers become
21 successful farmers, they had lots of marketing from other
22 farmers -- lots of mentoring from other farmers, and they

1 had a focus on a real specific market.

2 Kentucky is where I got started farming. And
3 we had tobacco allotments back in the old days. And, so,
4 there was a good market there, a steady market, secure
5 market. Identified strawberries to the local tourist
6 restaurants, and alfalfa for the horse farms in the areas
7 is other markets. And then I had a community that really
8 helped me get going and learned how to produce tobacco
9 and market to the horse farms, get along with them. And,
10 so, I had a real successful farm.

11 Then later on I started working with my
12 neighbors, developed marketing alternatives, ran a
13 200-farmer fresh vegetable cooperative. And we saw a lot
14 of people take up farming, because they had a ready
15 market right there. They had a bunch of farmers done
16 training sessions in the winter for them. And they --
17 during the season there's a network of farmers in a
18 little newsletter we put out to help them be successful.

19 I've also had the opportunity to work with
20 farmers about 25 -- over 25 countries around the world.
21 I did a little potato marketing project in Bolivia where
22 a group of farmers were able to cut out the middle man

1 and make more money for themselves. And new farmers were
2 attracted because there was a good market there. And our
3 community helped them learn and, so, they became
4 successful.

5 And in Ukraine I helped established a dairy so
6 that you aren't just taking your buckets of milk and
7 dumping it in a tanker and everybody -- somebody else
8 making the money, but -- so, the farmers could make more
9 money. And then new people were attracted because there
10 was a ready market. And their communities helped them
11 learn to become successful dairy farmers.

12 In the last couple of years I've been working
13 with farmers and slow food levers in Arkansas to develop
14 farmer's markets. And that's where I've seen the two
15 most successful sources of new farmers that I've ever
16 seen. And they were farmers that were establishing
17 farmer's markets, both with the traditional farmer's
18 market and also with online ordering to make it a lot
19 easier and less time consuming for the farmer, and
20 enlisted in Hot Springs and in the North Little Rock
21 area. And both of these farmers, as they established
22 their markets realized they needed new growers, more

1 growers to add to their -- the offerings that they had
2 and attract and satisfy their customers. And, so, they
3 helped a whole bunch of new people get started because
4 they had the markets, and because they were good mentors
5 to the new farmers.

6 Also, on the other hand, I've seen a lot of
7 beginning farm programs over the years which looked good,
8 with slick curricula, and thick binders, and lots of
9 experts, and didn't produce any farmers. One I used to
10 work with has been in existence for over 20 years and it
11 has produced a lot of NRCS staff, but very few farmers.
12 Of course, for a lot of people, maybe a desk job in USDA
13 is better than actually farming. But for those who love
14 farming and couldn't see doing anything else, then I
15 think the best way to get started is mentoring and
16 markets, whether you get a big binder at the end of the
17 program or not.

18 I've also seen some really well-intentioned
19 academic exercises called Beginning Farmer Programs. And
20 academic experts are usually nowadays really good at
21 their disciplines and they can help establish farmers a
22 lot. But it's hard to find somebody who's not actually

1 farming that can pull together all the disciplines that
2 you need in order to make a farmer successful -- or farm
3 successful.

4 So, if you're confronted with a proposal which
5 doesn't have a lot of farmers involved in the training
6 especially, I hope you run in the opposite direction,
7 because it probably won't be successful.

8 So, to wrap this up, you've got 17 or 18
9 potential need areas for training in the legislation.
10 And I hope you make marketing the top area. And please
11 ensure there's a strong marketing component as a required
12 feature of every successful proposal.

13 And in terms of methods, please ensure that
14 lots of farmers are involved in providing the training.

15 I've got a little bit of time left. And, so,
16 I just want to start you on your new mantra, markets and
17 mentoring. Markets and mentoring.

18 DR. SURESHWARAN: We have completed the list
19 of people who wanted to speak for this session, but we
20 have a few more minutes. Is there anyone else who wants
21 to come up and share their feedback or comments?

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Suresh --

1 DR. SURESHWARAN: Yeah.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- what -- do we have a
3 12:00 or are you talking about sections not for the day
4 right?

5 DR. SURESHWARAN: No. I'm just talking about
6 this section. The partnership section is over. And we
7 had planned till 10:30 before we start the next session
8 on outcomes space reporting.

9 Can we take a 10-minute break because that
10 will allow others to come in?

11 (Pause in proceedings.)

12 DR. HIPPE: Hello, everyone. We're going to
13 start up again. As you can tell, we established some
14 general time frames and subject areas to kind of guide
15 how -- folks in selecting, you know, an area that they
16 really wanted to hone in on, but we're totally fluid with
17 that. And we encourage you, even if you've not -- if you
18 just get kind of possessed of the need to get up and say
19 a few words, then do it. That's what we want you to do.
20 But -- so, don't feel like you -- we will need your name
21 at some point in time if you get up and start talking
22 about things, because we do want to be able to track

1 that. But, please, don't feel that you are constrained.
2 You can just get possessed of the need and get up and
3 talk.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: When the spirit moves.

5 DR. HIPPI: When the spirit moves you.

6 All right. Here's one thing I do want to let
7 you know immediately. We checked with our deputy, Debbie
8 Sheely, and our Administrator's Office, and this program
9 will be limited in overhead to 22 percent. So, just so
10 you know that from the mother ship comment. So, anyway,
11 that is -- that's a given for us.

12 So, let's proceed. And who's -- is there
13 anything else I needed to announce?

14 DR. SURESHWARAN: Don Tilmon.

15 DR. HIPPI: Don Tilmon.

16 DON TILMON: Good morning. My name is Don
17 Tilmon. And I'm here to offer comments on the Beginning
18 Farmer and Rancher Development Program on behalf of the
19 four Regional Extension Risk Management Education
20 Centers. These are located at my institution, the
21 University of Delaware, Washington State University,
22 Texas A&M University, and the University of Nebraska. We

1 also are supported by the Digital Center at the
2 University of Minnesota. They provide technical support
3 for all of our RME efforts. The Regional Extension RME
4 Network believes that the Beginning Farmers and Ranchers
5 Development Program offers a unique opportunity to
6 provide education to a segment of American agriculture
7 that would seem to us to be in a very vulnerable position
8 today, given the current economic environment, which has
9 severely reduced margins for producers. We appreciate
10 this forum in which to offer our input.

11 The Extension Risk Management Education
12 Program was initiated in 1996 and resulted from farmers,
13 stakeholders, and others from all segments of
14 agriculture, expressing the need for educational
15 assistance for producers to help them mitigate risks.
16 Congress, with the passage of the Agriculture Risk
17 Protection Act of 2000, ARPA, established the
18 partnerships for risk management education in Section 133
19 of ARPA, which states: "The secretary, acting through
20 CSREES, shall establish a program under which competitive
21 grants are made for the purpose of educating agricultural
22 producers about the full range of risk management

1 activities and other risk management strategies."

2 Today we would like to offer comments on a few
3 of the principles which we believe has set our program
4 apart from other CSREES programs, and if adopted by your
5 initiative, would help to ensure the success of your
6 venture.

7 The first of these is results-based
8 programing. The RME Program starts with the end result
9 in mind, when the proposals are put forth for funding.
10 Educators must have a vision of what the producers will
11 learn, achieve, or apply through their educational
12 efforts, as well as why these producers will want to
13 participate in the program in the first place.

14 Second, results-based verification system.
15 Educators apply for funds and report results through the
16 RME verification system which, as I said before, was
17 developed and is maintained by the Digital Center for
18 Risk Management Education at the University of Minnesota.

19 The integrated nature of this unique
20 application and reporting system allows for ease of
21 communication on the part of the project directors as
22 they proceed through their projects, as well as providing

1 a wealth of easily accessible information to the public
2 once a project is completed. We strongly recommend that
3 CSREES explore the use of this system for the Beginning
4 Farmers and Ranchers Development Program.

5 Partnerships. The enabling legislation of the
6 RME Program is entitled Partnerships for Risk Management
7 Education. It is our belief that Congress meant us to
8 take this literally, and as a result we have put much
9 emphasis on partnering between public and private,
10 especially nonprofit educators, in our program. We
11 believe that these partnerships have not only
12 strengthened the delivery of our funded programs, but
13 have served to open new sources of clientele to augment
14 those traditional extension audiences.

15 Regional approach. From the beginning the RME
16 Program has been delivered through four regional
17 centers. Utilizing an advisory council in each of these
18 regions, the RME Program is tailored to the unique needs
19 of each of these regions, with a diversity of clientele
20 in the beginning farmers and ranchers target audience, a
21 regional approach to delivery of programing would seem to
22 be a logical approach to take.

1 Special emphasis audience and curriculum
2 development. The 2008 Farm Bill amended Section 133 of
3 ARPA to include beginning and farmer ranchers audience in
4 the RME effort. The bill amendment did not, however,
5 change what is known as the program delivery mandate. As
6 such, the RME Program is restricted to producer
7 educational delivery and excludes curriculum
8 development. We strongly encourage that curriculum
9 development be included and emphasized in the Beginning
10 Farmers and Ranchers Program.

11 I want to thank the organizers of this forum
12 for the opportunity to offer comments. If any, of the
13 Regional Extension RME Centers, or the Digital Center,
14 can be of further assistance in the development of this
15 program, we stand ready to help. Thank you.

16 DR. HIPPI: Lisa Kivirist.

17 LISA KIVIRIST: Hi. Thank you. My name is
18 Lisa Kivirist. My family and I farm Inn Serendipity Farm
19 and Bed and Breakfast in Southwest Wisconsin, outside
20 Brown Town. And I thank you very much for the
21 opportunity to share some thoughts.

22 We have a small diversified market garden we

1 grow for our bed and breakfast and local markets. We
2 also harvest those very renewable products out there,
3 wind and sun. We run the farm on a hybrid renewable
4 energy system, wind and solar. We also do a lot of
5 writing on these issues of rural farm diversification and
6 green business, and have authored several books, Rural
7 Renaissance and Ecopreneuring, and I'm also a Kellogg
8 Food and Society Policy fellow. So, we're in a lot of
9 different heads.

10 It's interesting that you're talking to two --
11 you've heard from two women farmers who both have
12 serendipity in their farm name, because I think none of
13 us expected to be here today 12 years ago for me. But
14 there's a lot of story behind that. And I think we speak
15 to this new generation of farmers who today might be like
16 I was 12 years ago, sitting in a corporate cubicle
17 somewhere, about as far from the land as possible, but
18 their heart not in what they were doing day-to-day and
19 longing for alternatives. And I think this makes this a
20 very exciting time, because you're getting people like us
21 who come from a wide variety of reference, don't know
22 anything about growing -- or at least I know we didn't.

1 We took the Road to Organic Gardening Guide and a roll of
2 quarters with us when we left those jobs behind, but are
3 very passionate about making change here. And that's
4 what I find so inspiring and hopeful about the discussion
5 here today, that the themes we're talking about for this
6 new program are inherently the themes of organic and
7 sustainable agriculture. We're talking about
8 diversification of a lot of different types of programs.
9 And, believe me, we plant much more than one seed on our
10 small plots. We're talking about creativity, and
11 innovation, and reaching out to new markets, and
12 definitely not business as usual. But of the two I
13 wanted to focus on building on what's been said, is
14 collaboration. When we moved to our farm, our first call
15 was to MOSES in Basin, Wisconsin, the Midwest Organic
16 Sustainable Education Services, the Michael Fields
17 Agriculture Institute, or these -- all these
18 organizations that have been planting seeds for decades
19 that have really reaped some valuable programs. And to
20 prioritize on those strong roots, to grow with them, and
21 to connect with, again, more people like us, is a real
22 strong opportunity there, both from the -- an eligibility

1 role of who these programs are funding and also from an
2 evaluation perspective. Because when we connected with
3 these organizations, it was those face-to-face
4 encounters -- which I realize can't always be quantified
5 and outcome-based issues or numbers per se -- but are
6 extremely valuable, and the late night conversations we
7 had at the MOSES conference talking about these things,
8 talking about other people who have done it and been
9 there.

10 And importantly, too, within that of the
11 funding priorities, and looking at these issues from a
12 long-term perspective, funding multiple-year grants.
13 Because I truly believe that this is an opportunity to
14 change business as it's done in our country, in that
15 however we slice it our current economic crisis is
16 because of looking at things too much from a growth
17 perspective, too much from a bottom line perspective, and
18 too much from a financial perspective, and not long-term
19 sustainability.

20 The farmers going into sustainable ag, organic
21 ag, like ourselves, the numbers don't matter. We're
22 doing it for other reasons and we're really operating

1 from a much more triple bottom line perspective. Profit
2 is important. I've got a mortgage, too, and I've got a
3 kid who needs to college, but it's also the planet and
4 the people involved. And arguably that's going to take
5 us somewhere much different, but I think much more
6 viable, long-term for the health of our -- the next
7 generation of farmers after us.

8 And on that point, our son, Liam, turned seven
9 last week and somebody asked him that, you know, what do
10 you want to be when you grow up question. And he said,
11 farmer, rock star, president, in that order. And you can
12 cut out the rock star before president part. He has to
13 fund his parents' retirement somehow, I guess. But to
14 the point of, I'd like to see this program help parents
15 today look at farming as a viable generation for their
16 kids; and to look at countries like New Zealand, where
17 farming is up there with attorneys and accountants of
18 what you want your kids to be. And that's because of the
19 financial viability of it. And that's where these new
20 markets that are increasing 18, 20 percent, if you look
21 at organics alone, have that financial viability long
22 term.

1 So, it's exciting to see this. Thank you for
2 the opportunity there. But, again, to that long-term
3 growth of teaching entrepreneurial skills, not from the
4 same old same old, but for more of a environmental eco
5 mind set of, how can we plan our businesses efficiently,
6 and strategically, and financially viable, but also with
7 other environmental principles in mind? Thank you very
8 much.

9 DR. HIPPEL: Bob Wells.

10 BOB WELLS: Thank you. Good morning. I'm Bob
11 Wells. I'm a field agriculture economist for Iowa State
12 University Extension, and a member of the National
13 Leadership Team for Annie's Project. Committee, we have
14 submitted additional testimony we'd like incorporated.

15 As an example of a best education practice
16 that delivers results-based outcome, and is transferable
17 to the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program,
18 Annie's Project coordinates educational processes that
19 encompass a practical, broad vision of farm business
20 management, targets relevant subjects, and promotes group
21 dynamics by developing support networks.

22 Annie's Project concentrates on providing farm

1 management education in five risk management areas. And
2 while our target audience is the female in agriculture,
3 we believe this approach can be used to educate
4 participants in Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development
5 Program.

6 Annie's Project has been successful in
7 developing the knowledge, skills, and abilities that
8 empowers our participants to return to the farm business
9 management team and, one, ask the right questions to
10 develop and then enter into the farm decision process.
11 They can make and assume the decision making. And,
12 three, if they want, have the aptitude, and the ability,
13 and the desire to enter an operational phase using these
14 skills outside of the business unit.

15 Our key to success has been the development of
16 a best educational practices that meets the unique needs
17 of the participant and maintains the program integrity
18 across a wide range of agricultural enterprises and farm
19 and ranch business models.

20 Annie's Project is an opportunity for
21 educators to build multidisciplinary educational teams
22 with documented-results based outcomes. The course spans

1 18 hours of instruction where extension specialists and a
2 team of instructors deliver the core components.
3 Facilitators and practitioners lead the dialogue in every
4 day application. Participants then can engage in peer-
5 to-peer learning, applying those components to real time
6 farm business situations.

7 Annie's Project participants range from 8 to
8 84 -- 18 to 84. This includes a younger group of
9 participants just entering or wanting to enter farming,
10 and develop a succession plan that they can participate
11 in; or the group at the end of the age range that want to
12 develop a transition plan to get out of farming and
13 ranching. And by the end of the class we have identified
14 a third unit. That in the middle that all of the sudden
15 understands the need to develop and begin the decision
16 process in making a farm transition.

17 Note, these discussions usually begin before a
18 decision unit has been identified or the patriarch is
19 involved. Impacts documented through Annie's Project
20 include farm business women that increase their
21 knowledge, skills, and abilities in using risk management
22 tools. They gain confidence in their decision-making

1 ability, become more involved in the community, and have
2 a more viable farm business.

3 Outcomes of Annie's Project have been the
4 development and implementation of whole farm risk
5 management programs, the development and implementation
6 of farm business plans, and development of network -- and
7 entering networks and loan participants.

8 We work with many delivery methods. And we
9 have a range of developed and tested delivery methods.
10 Random extension educators putting on locally needs-based
11 classes, successfully used distance meetings, and a
12 partnership of extension, with the local community
13 colleges and nonprofits.

14 Some examples of locally-adapted programs
15 include programs specifically for row crop production,
16 livestock-based units, agritourism enterprises,
17 sustainable agriculture, and small acreage.

18 In 2006 we applied similar methodology to the
19 Young Farmer Program that involved 20 hours of intensive
20 instruction in a mixed audience setting. We built the
21 knowledge, skills, and ability level of this group
22 through educational programs. We guided the discussion

1 with interactive dialogue that validated their skills,
2 their knowledge, and fostered that mentoring network. In
3 other words, we help them connect with and access
4 resources beyond the classroom setting.

5 While this is one method, there are others.
6 But the strength of this approach is that we empower
7 young partners with the knowledge, skills and abilities,
8 reinforce their confidence to enter the decision-making
9 process, allow the participant to develop their own style
10 and approach to enter the decision process.

11 In the end, this method can be used to develop
12 Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Programs that
13 meet participant needs and have results-based outcomes.
14 Questions? Thank you.

15 DR. SURESHWARAN: Anyone else who wants to
16 come forward? We have about half an hour before the next
17 speaker.

18 I have been asked to stand behind the podium
19 for the purpose of the recording. In preparation of this
20 meeting we had identified several questions. We have
21 received feedback on most of those, but there are still a
22 couple of questions that we have that we would like to

1 ask you.

2 One of those questions is: Should there be a
3 limit on the number of proposals that can be submitted by
4 each eligible institution? Should there be a limit on
5 the number of proposals that can be submitted?

6 Another question that we had is: We heard
7 quite a lot about regions. What constitutes a region?
8 How do you define a region? Like, from some of you who
9 already know about the SAC Program and the RME Program,
10 we have regions defined in that context. Are those
11 sufficient?

12 You have feedback, or questions, comments?
13 You want to come -- is it better if he comes forward?

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, please.

15 JOHN MANGUS: I just feel that we can respond
16 to that. We've held probably 25 different USDA
17 partnerships over the last three or four years. The two
18 questions, one is number -- is the limit. I guess, from
19 my perspective, it's kind of self-limiting, because
20 you're not going to get the university -- North Carolina
21 State University trying to do projects in Washington
22 State. And, I mean, if there is some entity that, I

1 don't know, puts in 35 proposals, I guess if they're the
2 best proposals -- I mean, I don't know how that would
3 quite happen, because it's hard to hit those kind of
4 volumes on any type of proposal and do an effective job
5 with it. But, like I said, I think it's self-limiting.
6 If somebody puts in 35 proposals, they're probably not
7 going to be very good proposals, so, they probably won't
8 be funded. So, from our perspective, a limit is probably
9 not that important.

10 The other point was on the regions. The one
11 thing I would caution about the regions -- and specific
12 to our experience with RME -- they have regions. They
13 have ten regional offices. And to give you an idea,
14 we'll use the Spokane region, which includes Idaho,
15 Oregon and Washington. And I guess -- and Alaska -- I
16 don't know, is Alaska out of Spokane?

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Washington. Yes.

18 JOHN MANGUS: Okay. So, those four states.
19 The problem with their regions, though, is, if I went in
20 -- and let's say that there's a -- well, let me think of
21 a good one. Where Idaho meets Utah, they grow sugar
22 beets right there let's say. I cannot go in and target

1 sugar beet growers on that border, because I can't cross
2 regions. And, so, when you have ten regions, I can't go
3 to North Dakota and do something with Minnesota also.
4 Different regions.

5 So, when you create those regions, if you
6 really place hard limits on those, you really run into
7 some problems as far as stuff that makes sense. We all
8 know places -- Idaho and Oregon, they share right around
9 Boise, that Mallard County is some of the most fertile
10 farmland. It's an amazing place. And, fortunately, at
11 least in that case, they're in the same region, but if
12 they weren't, you couldn't do a project that cross those
13 boundaries. So, if you do regions, just consider that
14 you might be walking into that little trap.

15 STEVE SCHWARTZ: I'll just weigh in on those
16 two questions briefly. In terms of limit on proposals, I
17 think keeping -- I can't really see one group doing more
18 than one good proposal to advance their services;
19 however, a group such as International Farm Transition
20 Network, they might want to make a proposal to do
21 research around the game farmer issues, and another one
22 to do kind of capacity building for member groups in

1 states that are building up their capacity. So, I think
2 that's something to weigh in as you're deciding this.

3 I mean, I -- one university applying for ten
4 grants, I think that doesn't make sense. And I agree
5 with the former comment, that it's going to be somewhat
6 self-limiting, but you could help people put those limits
7 on themselves. And that would be a good thing.

8 In terms of regions, I don't think it's so
9 important to have specific regions as it is to make sure
10 that there's a balance of where the grants are going. If
11 they're all going to Alabama or California, we wouldn't
12 have been doing our job here. And, so, I think that's --
13 you know, everybody understands that. But making sure
14 that the committee's balancing the -- where the funds are
15 going. That's all.

16 DR. SURESHWARAN: Okay. Questions about the
17 number of proposals, we are required to provide three
18 written reviews for every proposal that is accepted into
19 the program. So, if we have lots and lots of proposals,
20 we need lots and lots of reviewers and it takes time for
21 everyone. You will need to come forward and identify
22 yourself.

1 KENT SCHESCKE: I just have a question.

2 DR. SURESHWARAN: Yeah. Sure. Go ahead.

3 KENT SCHESCKE: The question is: What kind of
4 criteria --

5 COURT REPORTER: I'm sorry, sir, I can't hear
6 you.

7 KENT SCHESCKE: Oh, okay.

8 DR. SURESHWARAN: And I think you have to
9 identify yourself.

10 KENT SCHESCKE: Kent Schescke with National
11 FFA. And I just wanted to propose a question, maybe this
12 may stimulate some discussion. What are the criteria and
13 backgrounds that you plan to look for, in terms of your
14 reviewers?

15 The reason I ask that question, we've had
16 experience in other programs we've worked with --
17 particularly in the CSREES -- where the programs -- the
18 reviewers are fairly narrow and they don't understand all
19 -- delivery systems, other than those that might be based
20 or come out of extension education. And that's a
21 question.

22 DR. SURESHWARAN: I think CSR -- I think

1 Debbie Sheely can provide more clarification if needed.

2 But in recent years, CSREES has changed tremendously,
3 with more emphasis on integrated programs, and more
4 extension and teaching faculty, and community-based
5 organizations being included in review panels. So, I
6 think it has changed tremendously from what it was.

7 Debbie, you want to come forward and answer
8 the question?

9 DEBBIE SHEELY: Good morning. I'm Debbie
10 Sheely. I'm the interim deputy administrator for the
11 Competitive Programs Unit here at CSREES. And I just
12 wanted to add to what Suresh said. We will be including
13 on our peer review panels all the relevant expertise that
14 we need to review those proposals. So, that's a broad
15 statement, but that is what we'll be looking to do. And
16 if you all have any opinions on what that should look
17 like, please step forward and give us your thoughts on
18 that today.

19 DR. SURESHWARAN: Okay. Anymore feedback for
20 us on those two questions?

21 We would like to try and identify more
22 reviewers from different communities. If you are

1 interested in reviewing for us, please send us an
2 e-mail. If you know of someone who can review for us,
3 and who is not submitting an application this year,
4 please send us or nominate them to the review panel.

5 There is another question here that we have:
6 What are some of the constraints in developing a
7 competent application to the Beginning Farmers and
8 Ranchers Development Program as outlined in the Farm
9 Bill?

10 What are any constraints that you think you
11 may have in developing a proposal?

12 BOB WELLS: Once again I'm Bob Wells, Iowa
13 State University. We see the definition of a beginning
14 farmer as defined in the bill. But a lot of times what
15 we find in actual practice when we go to the ground with
16 these programs, is the audience that's being targeted by
17 that definition does not have the ability to make the
18 decision in a transition.

19 So, what we would like to see is some leeway
20 that we're going to be helping those beginning farmers to
21 meet the rule. But if we develop a program that works
22 with a group that wants to transition out of the farm, or

1 they want to start building a transition statement, we'd
2 like to have some leeway in the RFA that we can approach
3 those two particular needs when we address the problem
4 with beginning farmers. Thank you.

5 ADAM WARTHESEN: My name is Adam Warthesen.
6 And I guess as I was sitting down I was thinking about
7 that first question you asked, about: Should there be a
8 limit on a number of proposals that a certain group or
9 institution submits?

10 And I guess I think that predominantly we'll
11 see maybe one or two from certain groups or
12 institutions. One of the things I want to make sure is
13 just recognized, is that in one proposal that a group
14 might submit saying we would like to see some additional
15 support from another organization that's doing existing
16 training that might already have a proposal forward. So,
17 let's say an organization does a mentoring and they say,
18 well, we'd like a credit piece. And there's an
19 organization out there that does credit but also is
20 getting funding. We wouldn't -- you know, just because
21 they're providing support to another program that they
22 would be, you know, looked at like, well, they're already

1 doing two or three times as much. You know, I'm just
2 thinking of ways that other organizations -- because what
3 we can build on is each other's strengths a lot of times,
4 reaching out to existing programs and maybe help
5 facilitate ones that are ongoing. So, I wouldn't want --
6 as we think about multiple proposals coming from
7 institutions, they have to be categorized in that same
8 train of thought.

9 DR. SURESHWARAN: We have some time. Anymore
10 comments, feedback?

11 How should the educational teams discussed in
12 the Farm Bill be organized? Should these educational
13 teams be organized regionally or by geographic areas?

14 Are there any comments, suggestions?

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Say a little bit more
16 about your thoughts on that.

17 DR. SURESHWARAN: We are not currently in a
18 stage really -- we have departmental -- I can't stand
19 behind this thing. Okay. We haven't really thought much
20 of it, because we have organized several stakeholder
21 listening sessions. What we have been doing is to go
22 through the legislation, look at other programs, other

1 similar programs and what they do. So, at the moment we
2 are not in a position to say what we are thinking,
3 because the whole team thinks in different ways. There
4 might be 10 or 15 different ways and none of us have
5 decided anything as yet.

6 You need to come forward and identify
7 yourself. Sorry.

8 KENT SCHESCKE: Ken Schescke with National
9 FFA. Just to respond to a little bit of that question.
10 I think it would be important -- if we want to look at
11 team approach -- is to look at organizations that can
12 kind of cross the spectrum.

13 My experience, having been a classroom teacher
14 for a number of years and having worked with business and
15 partnerships, there are those groups that we've observed
16 that are good at producing materials. And there are
17 groups that are good at delivery, dissemination, and have
18 a network to get in front of it. So, I think as you look
19 at that, just because a group is good at developing, you
20 need to kind of look at, do they have the network -- the
21 linkages to actually do the delivery of it, and the
22 follow up, and evaluation, and all the things that have

1 to go with it?

2 So, you know, there may be a case where teams
3 make sense, because an organization may be great at
4 developing, but lacks the network, or the ability to
5 deliver this in a way that makes sense. So, I think when
6 you look at it, it's not just, you know, who's really
7 good at developing materials, but who's good at
8 developing materials, who's good at delivering materials,
9 who's good at doing the evaluation to follow up. And it
10 may, even amongst those of us that may want to
11 participate in this program, form some natural teams
12 alliances, coalitions, to bring people together that have
13 different expertise.

14 TRACI BRUCKNER: Traci Bruckner with the
15 Center for Rural Affairs and I have comments to make
16 later. But to respond to this question, I think the one
17 thing that we would like to see -- and Aimee referenced
18 this earlier -- that before we form education teams and
19 decide exactly what to do with that, I think we need to
20 have a huge scoping project that, you know, scours the
21 country side and figures out what's really out there, and
22 where the gaps are, and what's needed, and then use that

1 information to decide how these educational teams would
2 be formed.

3 So, the first year -- I wouldn't recommend
4 forming those educational teams this first year, I would
5 figure out what's out there. Maybe give somebody a grant
6 to really do the scoping project, or CSREES does that
7 scoping project themselves and working in collaboration
8 with some community-based groups, non-profit groups,
9 extension and so forth to really figure out what's out
10 there and what exists.

11 DR. SURESHWARAN: To respond to that
12 statement, do these scoping projects have to be regional,
13 national?

14 TRACI BRUCKNER: I would say national.

15 ADAM WARTHESEN: My name is Adam Warthesen
16 again. I'm with the Land Stewardship Project. I guess
17 I'm going to just sound off in support of that same sort
18 of concept of -- I think we should provide and do some
19 looking into what are sort of the existing programs, what
20 are some of the gaps that aren't out there, before we
21 create educational teams. And we do that in the first
22 cycle of grants.

1 I think it could be national. I think it
2 could be regional as well. Maybe we look at three
3 proposals in three different regions of the nation, you
4 know, in the Midwest, in the New England, and southeast
5 and western states. I think that that could provide a
6 real useful understanding of what's out there and what's
7 not out there. And then that provides an example of we
8 could maybe group these education teams, which -- whether
9 that's regional, or geographic, or whatever, that will
10 provide a better understanding of that.

11 I think it also then brings itself to, well,
12 how do we find out about, you know, that? I think that
13 might be a question of, do we provide that information,
14 then, on a clearing house, or on some sort of website?
15 And I think there's a number of websites out there or
16 clearing houses, but maybe there should be one -- a good
17 central location that we can house that at, as long as it
18 doesn't take away from other organizations that are doing
19 really good web outreach for beginning farmers. But
20 that's just my suggestion.

21 BOB WELLS: Bob Wells, Iowa State University.
22 We're talking about broad-based teams and educational

1 units in the previous speakers. Mine's a little bit
2 closer to the ground. I think it ought to be imperative
3 that, number one, the projects that get awards are
4 results-based outcomes.

5 And, number two, that the review team that
6 approves those awards makes sure that the educational
7 teams and components to give those outcomes are in place
8 with that RFA.

9 CAROLINE KUEBLER: Hi. Caroline Kuebler with
10 the American Forest Foundation. I would also suggest
11 that maybe the educational teams be more topical.
12 Because I know, if you're dealing with family forest
13 owners, it's a very different structure of education for
14 family forest owners than regular ranchers and farmers,
15 the scale of time periods for managing a forest is much
16 larger than annual. But -- so, I would suggest maybe
17 topical education suggestion.

18 AIMEE WITTEMAN: I wanted to address one of
19 the other questions. You asked about the constraints
20 that people might be under in developing a proposal. And
21 just to suggest that, I think technical assistance should
22 be provided, both for proposal writing, but also for

1 outcome-based reporting, which can be pretty tricky
2 sometimes and is different than just results-oriented
3 reporting. So, I think that the program -- the program
4 administrators will have to invent what works best for
5 this program. And it might be having regional teams, or
6 having a third party that provides that technical
7 assistance. But I think looking at technical assistance
8 to address the constraints that the diversity of groups
9 will have in submitting a proposal be considered.

10 Thanks.

11 COURT REPORTER: Identify yourself.

12 AIMEE WITTEMAN: Oh, I'm sorry. And I'm Aimee
13 Witteman with the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition.

14 DJIME ADOUM: My colleague is sitting here
15 laughing at me. My name is Djime Adoum. I'm from the
16 office of Planning and Accountability at CSREES. And
17 I've been very encouraged with the discussion so far, in
18 terms of talking about outcome-based reporting. And the
19 question recently -- I mean, just before -- that preceded
20 me, is that we are really also in the business of working
21 with you, in terms of figuring out -- helping you out,
22 with respect to what is that we need -- the good stuff

1 you generate, how can you report it to us? So, we are
2 streamlining the process. We're very heavy into logic
3 models. Some of our proposals have actually required
4 logic models. So, we are with you in this. We're here
5 to help you out. So, we're going to really streamline
6 this, so, when you submit some stuff it might be just a
7 page or two. Please do not hesitate to talk to us
8 through your NPS or directly to us so that we can really
9 get this up and running in the best possible way
10 possible. Thank you.

11 DR. SURESHWARAN: Just for information, how
12 many of you know what the logic model is? It's about 50
13 percent, yeah.

14 Anymore comments, suggestions?

15 Okay. Next session is supposed to begin.

16 DR. HIPPI: Curriculum and training clearing
17 house is our section now. And, Kent, are you coming back
18 up?

19 KENT SCHESCKE: Yes. Good morning. Again, my
20 name is Kent Schescke with National FFA. And this is an
21 area that we have an interest in. One of our challenges
22 is for our teachers, how do we provide high quality,

1 relevant instructional resources for the teacher? Again,
2 just, again, from our perspective and our classroom
3 school-based programs we serve an audience of a million
4 students studying agriculture. And at the heart of what
5 we teach is really production agriculture, because even a
6 lot of our students are interested in that, other
7 students are interested in careers upstream, downstream
8 of it. But philosophically it's about an understanding
9 of production agriculture, which we think provides the
10 basis for students that want to go into that from a
11 career standpoint. I work with a million students, 7,500
12 locations, 11,000 teachers.

13 A little bit of history from our perspective
14 is, is that when agriculture education started 90 years
15 ago, curriculum was either a function of that local
16 school district, and in a lot of cases the state. What
17 we've observed today is that nationally university-based
18 curriculum centers, there's probably only four or five
19 left in the country that are viable. And that number
20 decreases by one every two or three years. So, you know,
21 we've taken the approach of, how do we provide
22 instructional resources? And, again, there's a

1 difference between instructional resources and
2 curriculum. Curriculum is much more comprehensive than
3 that and it really takes a good basis of instructional
4 materials, and really allows the flexibility of the
5 teacher, then, to localize the curriculum based upon the
6 instructional resources that are available to them.

7 We've kind of covered this whole gamete. You
8 know, when we started in this business really 15 years
9 ago, we were producing things in three-inch binders that
10 took us sometimes three years to move through development
11 and dissemination. We went from there to CD ROM. And I
12 think where we're at today is the web.

13 We have invested, in the last year, and
14 putting in place a operation of a learning management
15 system. And whether, you know, materials to this program
16 are made available through our system one-on-one. I
17 think to really serve it, it needs to go beyond the web
18 and exist in some form of learning management system,
19 which really creates a certain amount of interaction and
20 interactivity that helps engage the learning process.
21 Ours is called Team Ag Ed Learning Center. It's
22 taelc.org. And I'd invite any of you to go look at it.

1 It's based upon a commercial product called learn.com.

2 And in there we put really two types of
3 curriculum materials, instruction materials. One of
4 those is, lesson plans that are designed for a presenter
5 or teacher to get up and work with them. And, again,
6 it's structured very much in terms of almost to be
7 prescriptive, in terms of what the teacher says about
8 topics, breaking down the learning objectives, what are
9 the outcomes from that lesson, what are the affiliated
10 activities.

11 And the other part of it is, is it's really
12 more for the student, the self-learner, to go through
13 that on a self base, but also how do you test for
14 comprehension? How do you make sure that in ways you
15 really make that student go through relearn things to
16 then come forward and demonstrate that they know it?

17 And we're using that for many reasons, because
18 in a lot of schools that learning management system will
19 over time replace textbooks. In other words, as a
20 teacher gives an assignment, students will go on the web,
21 they will go through self-based instruction, and it will
22 test for comprehension. The student -- the teachers will

1 actually be able to go and log in the system, see which
2 of their systems -- or how -- how many students went
3 through that.

4 I see it as a couple function. One is, is
5 that there's a lot of materials out there --
6 instructional materials that we can put through our
7 system already. We decided to be a pipeline, to really
8 say to our 11,000 teachers, how do we provide them as
9 many possible resources that they can then look at,
10 evaluate, and in their classroom?

11 And the other part of it it really needs to
12 provide is a translation. There's lots of information
13 out there. But there is a difference between information
14 and teachable content. Information has to be almost
15 translated into teachable content. You can't just take a
16 technical brochure and put it out there for -- and expect
17 people to use it. It has to really be translated into
18 teachable content. And that's, again, another function
19 of it. And in some cases it really actually even has to
20 be development of that materials.

21 System needs to be trackable. And that was
22 one of the things that we looked at in opting our

1 system. We wanted to know how many people not only went
2 on and used it, but where do they use it? How much time
3 do they spend on each of the sections or pages? How
4 often did they come back to that? And a lot of times
5 web-based systems do not have that capability. I think
6 whatever system you look at needs to have tractability
7 and accountability, and that really kind of gets back to
8 some of the measures of, are we doing what we say we do?
9 And also, with the idea that -- especially on the self-
10 paced ones, that you really are measuring for
11 comprehension as you go through that.

12 And it needs to be kind of organized around --
13 you know, as somebody said earlier, around topics and
14 different taxonomies. You know, when we look at animal
15 science, plant science, agribusiness systems, financial
16 management, natural resources. There's -- ours -- the
17 ones that we're building is actually based upon projects
18 being conducted by the Department of Education. It's
19 looking at all of the work force. And within that
20 schematic, agriculture, food and natural resources is one
21 of 16 career cluster areas. Within that there are eight
22 division areas that really work from a systems approach,

1 animal systems, plant science, plant systems, financial
2 systems. And, again, production agriculture crosses lots
3 of these, but it helps organize it by areas so that
4 teachers make it easy to find.

5 And I would make this offer, too, that as many
6 of you compete for this grant program, that if you have
7 materials that you're successful in developing, and you
8 really want to access our audience of a million students,
9 11,000 teachers, we'd be happy to work with you to make
10 sure that we provide that access through our system. So,
11 I think there needs to be this connectivity between
12 multiple systems so that we make it easy to navigate.
13 Thank you.

14 DR. HIPPI: Anyone else want to come up and
15 speak to curriculum and -- yeah.

16 JIMMY HENNING: My name is Jimmy Henning. I'm
17 -- I represent the University of Kentucky. I'm also on
18 the governing board of the National E-Extension Effort,
19 which is an online resource effort for the Land Grant
20 System of the United States. And I would just echo what
21 Kent said, that we need to have a system that will allow
22 us to take all these resources and make them accessible.

1 I would just say that the E-extension
2 framework is already in place with learning modules
3 present, with access to experts that, I think, would be
4 an excellent framework for the Beginning Farmer and
5 Rancher Program to take advantage of.

6 DR. HIPPI: I tell Suresh that between the two
7 of us we have one writing at this point, so, you'll see
8 us whispering a lot up here trying to keep each other on
9 track.

10 I don't want to get in trouble for not using
11 the mike either. There are a couple of other questions
12 that we kind of posed to the group. So, please feel free
13 to come up and give us your thoughts on these as well.
14 One of these is: How can the CSREES program funding for
15 BFRDP be optimized?

16 There are lots of programs that are housed,
17 not only within this agency, but with other USDA
18 agencies, and others. So, please give us your thoughts
19 about that.

20 The other thing that we'd like to ask your
21 opinion on, as well: What do you consider to be the
22 biggest challenges facing beginning farmers and ranchers

1 at this moment in time?

2 And, so, I encourage you to come on up, give
3 us your thoughts on those two areas. Number one, how can
4 we optimize how this program -- how it functions and the
5 leveraging that is a potential with other funded areas?
6 And also, what are the other biggest challenges? Not
7 only to beginning farmer and ranch -- come on up, Traci
8 -- but not only to beginning farmers and ranchers, but to
9 the education providers as well.

10 TRACI BRUCKNER: First of all, how can this
11 program leverage funding? I think one of the things that
12 needs to be present in proposals and projects that are
13 funded, is how these -- how through BFRDP they're also
14 going to educate farmers and ranchers on the other Farm
15 Bill Programs that are available to make them successful,
16 especially in high-value niche markets.

17 How can we link them to conservation programs
18 that support the sustainable farming operations they want
19 to create? How can we link them to programs that help
20 them develop value-added enterprises? So, I think that's
21 how we can leverage some of this. And being based in
22 Nebraska -- and, I mean, this is a problem all over the

1 country is land values and access to land is the --
2 probably -- and access to credit are two of the biggest
3 problems facing farmers and ranchers, especially
4 beginning farmers and ranchers. We've seen escalating
5 land values over the last few years, and I think there's
6 some people that are taking a pretty big substantial risk
7 on trying to leverage resources to gain access to that
8 land. So, I think one of the things that this program
9 can do, is really help assess how farmers and ranchers in
10 the future are going to gain access to land. What are
11 the barriers in gaining access to land, and how can we
12 break down those barriers so that we can ensure
13 economically and sustainable farming operations in the
14 future?

15 And also the credit access. What can we do to
16 break down barriers to credit for beginning farmers and
17 ranchers? And that's a huge issue that I hear about a
18 lot. A lot of the -- our staff at the Center for Rural
19 Affairs work directly with beginning farmers and
20 ranchers. I mean, that's one of the biggest challenges.

21 You -- and I think leveraging this and
22 accessing high-value niche markets for beginning farmers

1 and ranchers is one way to help them be successful in
2 that. Because growing yellow number two corn is a very
3 high intensive, high input, high dollar game. And it's
4 not necessarily the biggest and best strategy for
5 beginning farmers and ranchers.

6 DR. HIPPI: Anyone else? Anyone in the back of
7 the room prepared yourself to come forward?

8 KENT SCHESCKE: Kent Schescke with National
9 FFA. I spent a lot of time working with different
10 agencies in USDA, and I'm often amazed at the lack of
11 interconnectivity. And I think this is a program where
12 you can really say up front, this needs to be a driver.
13 And I think the programs -- there needs to be even maybe
14 an element of the review process. And I don't know
15 whether this is led by CSREES and other agents to see,
16 what connectivity does it have to other parts of USDA
17 Programs that would be beneficial? You know, the --
18 there are -- case in point, if you're out there
19 developing electronic record keeping systems for
20 beginning farmers, you need to say, Does this plug into
21 and meet the metrics that's required by RMA for risk
22 management programs? Does it plug into and include the

1 metrics that FSA is looking for in their beginning farmer
2 loan programs? So, there needs to be that cross
3 fertilization of ideas.

4 And even after grants are awarded, to identify
5 what other USDA agencies could, should be involved in the
6 review process, provide technical expertise, plug into
7 resources, I think that would be good. Because they all
8 have a mandate outreach. And I think CSREES, through
9 this program, is able to help those people with that
10 outreach mandate.

11 Too often there's not good cross pollination
12 of ideas, and resources, and things like that. That
13 there's too much of kind of -- agricultural pun -- silo
14 mentality. And I think you all have the opportunity with
15 this program and structure to say, we have the
16 opportunity to look across all of USDA. And with these
17 different partners, different nonprofits, different
18 groups that are working on these programs, try to provide
19 those linkages. And as we look at, you know, things that
20 are electronic based, there's all kinds of opportunities
21 to provide point-to-point connection and tie in other
22 resources that are available by USDA.

1 So, I would ask you to think about that
2 process. And if you, you know, need to form an advisory
3 committee from all of these other USDA agencies that
4 provide some of these to help you in that process, that
5 might be a good idea.

6 I serve on the USDA National Agriculture
7 Statistic Service Advisory Board. And somebody was
8 talking about research. Well, you know, NAS has all
9 kinds of data and is in the process of collecting data,
10 and rather than to commission somebody else to go out and
11 do a research project, it might be a good use of funds to
12 go back to NAS and say, we need better data on beginning
13 farmer programs and impact. Let's work with an
14 institution like NAS that's already out there collecting
15 that data to make sure that this program has the relevant
16 data that you need on small and beginning farmers.

17 STEVE SCHWARTZ: Steve Schwartz with
18 California FarmLinks. So, I had a couple comments on
19 priorities, which I was going to say later. But on this
20 question of how to optimize the funds. I mean, I think
21 as -- I think there's a couple schools of thought for
22 people that are writing grants and doing proposal

1 writing. When they're asked the question: What's the
2 budget for this project? I think one school of thought
3 is, well, you come back with a question of, well, what's
4 the maximum you're allowed to apply for? And that's the
5 budget, right?

6 So, then -- and another school would be, well,
7 let's figure out what we need and apply for that. And
8 another school would be, let's figure out what we need
9 and realize they're probably going to cut it X percent,
10 so, we add that to it, right? So, those are three
11 schools.

12 And I think -- I'm thinking of another federal
13 program that's supported a lot of organizations in
14 helping underserved farmers. And the conventional wisdom
15 within the groups, and I think around the country that
16 applies, is, well, the -- one year they just cut
17 everybody 25 percent, whatever they ask for. So, then
18 next year around people scratch their heads say, well, we
19 should probably, you know, ask for a little more than we
20 think we need.

21 And then another year, I think they took the
22 top ranking proposals and then they said, well, we're

1 going to spread it around. We're going to cut -- well,
2 we're not going to spread it around, we're going to give
3 the very top ranking proposals everything they asked for.

4 So, I guess my advice, in terms of trying to
5 figure out -- or my thoughts on how best to optimize the
6 use of these funds is, don't be arbitrary, look carefully
7 at the budgets and really -- and make that a big part of
8 what you're asking these committees to evaluate. Does
9 the budget make sense? I mean, we -- for -- I think my
10 organization is in a place right now where we could use
11 \$250,000 really well in a year. Five years ago we
12 weren't in that position. And at that time \$50,000 would
13 make -- would double the amount of staff we had and
14 double our capacity. So, you look at what a full-time
15 equivalent cost a particular group in a different region
16 of the country, and look at what they're asking for and
17 think about the different needs, and are there -- are
18 budgets padded. How do you -- look -- make that a big
19 responsibility for that committee. That would be a way
20 to help out to my expense.

21 ZACHARIAH BAKER: Good morning. My name is
22 Zach Baker. I'm with the Organic Farming Research

1 Foundation. I'll be giving comments a little later. But
2 I thought this question of how to best optimize funding
3 really gets to the root of my comments, is in looking at
4 what systems you're supporting through the program, and
5 the benefits that those beginning farmers and ranchers
6 will be providing for the life of their continuing
7 farming and ranching from beginning to the end. And if
8 you look at those and account for those, organic farming
9 and organic production is really the best bang for the
10 buck in many cases. There's a number of conservation
11 benefits, nutrition benefits, risk management benefits
12 all in one package.

13 And, so, I'd encourage you all in thinking
14 about prioritizing applications or using funds to
15 prioritize organic systems in the work that -- in the
16 grants that you are giving.

17 And I also want to echo the point of kind of
18 cross-pollinazation of the existing programs that are out
19 there. There's a lot of good work being done in the
20 Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative and
21 other organic programs. There's new programs in the
22 conservation type of the Farm Bill that are requiring

1 more outreach and technical assisting for organic
2 farmers. And, so, coordination between those resources
3 within USDA is really important.

4 And just to go back to your question about a
5 clearing house, there's an excellent grant going on right
6 now called E-Organic, which is trying to create a
7 information system for organic farmers. And it's
8 supposed to be exactly a clearing house for organic
9 agriculture. And, so, I would encourage you to look at
10 that in determining how you do your clearing house. And
11 also ATTRA which -- Appropriate Technology of Transfer to
12 Rural Areas Program has been an excellent program. And
13 any lessons learned from that program should be included
14 in the clearing house. And the clearing house should
15 also try not to interfere with the ATTRA Program or
16 duplicate efforts. Thank you.

17 ROSANNAH TAYLOR: Hello. My name is Rosannah
18 Taylor. And I'm with the USDA Office of Small Farms
19 Coordination. And I have heard a lot about online
20 resources. But I wanted to know, is -- will there be any
21 provision for reaching the people who are in the back
22 woods country, the people who are -- I don't want to call

1 them illiterate -- who are not able to manage to get
2 through the mammoth pile of documents to fill out these
3 documents because they don't understand? And I feel that
4 if you rely primarily on online resources, that that
5 group is going to be missed. So, one suggestion would be
6 maybe to have some education programs where you would
7 train the young people so that they can go back and help
8 their -- the parents, and the landowners, and the farmers
9 with filling out those proposals so that they could have,
10 you know, equal access to the funding.

11 So, I think that, don't leave the people who
12 don't have access to the Internet, or who don't have
13 access to telephone. So, this may have been covered,
14 but, anyway, I was late, so -- but I thought I would
15 mention that. Thank you.

16 ADAM WARTHESEN: My name is Adam Warthesen.
17 Just one thing I wanted to ask of CSREES. These
18 questions are really helpful in us also thinking about
19 how the program works. And, I mean, I -- you know, I'm
20 writing them down as fast as I can to figure out how we
21 make maybe additional comments to support those. But if
22 you have those anywhere available online, or even on a

1 Word document, that would be great for some of us leaving
2 today.

3 When we talked about the question of, what do
4 you consider to be the biggest struggles facing farmers
5 or educators? In the meetings that we've done with a
6 number of organizations -- I kind of wrote these down --
7 there's sort of three pieces that I think we identified
8 are some of the struggles that are facing farmers. And
9 they've been talked about here as well. One was the lack
10 of access to networks. One of the farmers from
11 Massachusetts talked about farmer-to-farmer, really
12 helpful in learning and figuring out, you know, what is
13 it that he needs to help him operate his operation? So,
14 BFRDP provides some of that support to those sort of
15 networks. So, I think that's important.

16 The second one -- and I think many of us
17 recognize this -- is access to land. Land values in
18 Minnesota, you know, are four to 6,000 dollars an acre.
19 So, innovative strategies to get onto land, to access
20 that land. And part of that comes down to adequate
21 business planning, which was mentioned, again, here. The
22 programs that can offer that, adequate business planning

1 helps people identify their credit, helps them identify
2 markets. It's really useful in sort of addressing a
3 number of those struggles that might be facing people.

4 In terms of what is maybe some of the
5 struggles that some of the educators are facing as a
6 large-term educator being. I know many of the groups we
7 work with it's sort of, how do we maintain consistent
8 funding for the work we're doing? You know, because with
9 the changing economy it's going to be tougher. So, I
10 think this program coming on is really going to be
11 important for a lot of those organizations thinking, how
12 do we really maximize our efforts? How do we plan
13 ahead? And as we're thinking about planning ahead,
14 multi-year grants allow people to say, you know, in two
15 or three years out we're going to have support to really
16 deliver this. It really allows us to focus on those
17 objectives of the training or the education that they're
18 doing.

19 DR. HIPPI: Any other comments on those areas?

20 DR. SURESHWARAN: I want to go back to a topic
21 that was raised a few minutes ago, and that's about the
22 panel members. I would like to have more come in about

1 the characteristics of panelists and panel managers that
2 you expect for this program, or what you think will be
3 desirable for this program.

4 TRACI BRUCKNER: For this program I think it's
5 important that the review panel consists of
6 representation from actual beginning farmers and
7 ranchers, from socially disadvantaged farmers and
8 ranchers, including immigrant representation. Women
9 farmers and ranchers, that's also a really increased
10 segment of farming and ranching, especially when it comes
11 to land ownership. And then also nonprofit and
12 community-based organizations that have a success rate of
13 serving beginning farmers and ranchers in developing
14 educational and mentoring programs, I think, is really
15 critical to be a part of this panel.

16 JEREMY BARKER-PLOTKIN: Yeah, I'd like to
17 support all those things that Traci said. I thought they
18 were all great.

19 DR. SURESHWARAN: Can you --

20 JEREMY BARKER-PLOTKIN: I also --

21 DR. SURESHWARAN: -- identify yourself?

22 JEREMY BARKER-PLOTKIN: Oh, sorry, Jeremy

1 Barker-Plotkin, Simple Gifts Farm. I also wanted to add
2 to the list, organic farmers and people who have
3 experience with direct marketing and local marketing.

4 LISA KIVIRIST: Lisa Kivirist, Inn
5 Serendipity. To add onto that, if you want farmers on
6 this panel, you've got to work with the growing
7 calendar. Doing this for a couple of days in June and
8 expecting farmers to review panels at the peak of the
9 growing season just won't work. It needs to be
10 accommodated into the season. I realize there's the
11 schedule with the call for proposals, and the ideal would
12 be reviewing, like, now, when the season is coming to a
13 close, or December/January.

14 DR. SURESHWARAN: Any additional comments,
15 suggestions?

16 ROSANNAH TAYLOR: Rosannah Taylor, Office of
17 Small Farms Coordination. I have been on some of the
18 USDA grants review panels, and I think some of the people
19 on there are not qualified. So, I think it's very
20 important that the people who are on these panels are
21 qualified to be on this panel, that they reflect the
22 customers.

1 I know one panel it was a secretary, she knew
2 nothing about the proposal. It was, like, for I think a
3 land grant institution research proposal. She knew
4 nothing about the proposal. So, I want to make sure that
5 you all should make sure that the reviewers represent the
6 customers and that they have the expertise to make the
7 decision. Thank you.

8 DENNIS HALL: My name is Dennis Hall. I'm
9 with Pennsylvania's Department of Agriculture. When you
10 think about looking at expertise for the panel for those
11 who have been historically underrepresented in the
12 agriculture community, I would encourage you to look at
13 the Department of Education's Trio Programs, because
14 they're based in educational outcomes; as well as labor
15 and industry, the CAMP Program, which stands for the
16 College Assistance Migrant Program. I think they would
17 give you an expertise which looks at agriculture
18 differently, as well as the individuals involved.

19 DR. SURESHWARAN: Thank you. Lots of good
20 suggestions. Anyone else?

21 The next speaker is 12:00, but is the person
22 here, Marsha?

1 DR. HIPPE: This -- we're moving into the area
2 of quality, if you want to gather thoughts. Thanks,
3 Marsha.

4 MARSHA PURCELL: Good morning. I wanted to
5 look and make sure -- I didn't think it was noon yet.
6 Good morning. My name is Marsha Purcell. I'm the
7 director of Program Development for the American Farm
8 Bureau Federation. And part of my job is to work on
9 rural health and safety issues. But I'm here today as a
10 member of the board of directors of the Agricultural
11 Safety and Health Council of America, ASHCA, to talk to
12 you on behalf of the board of directors of ASHCA. I
13 serve as secretary/treasurer of that organization. And
14 the -- ASHCA is -- was established to pursue a national
15 strategy to create a hazard free work environment for
16 American agriculture. The council is comprised of
17 agricultural group -- producer groups and organizations,
18 agribusiness, and academic and public health
19 institutions.

20 Agriculture ranks as one of America's most
21 hazardous industries. In an average year about 580
22 adults die while doing farm work, and another 130

1 children lose their lives in agricultural-related
2 incidents. Each day on our farms and ranches across the
3 country, about 250 workers suffer lost time injuries, and
4 71 children are seriously injured. Agriculture, due to
5 its decentralized nature and diverse structure, lags
6 behind other industries in reducing the toll on its
7 workers, with a fatality rate of about eight times the
8 all-industry average.

9 The Agricultural Safety and Health Council of
10 America was established to pursue a national strategy for
11 achieving a hazard free work environment for American
12 agriculture. The council is comprised, as I said
13 earlier, of producer groups and organizations in
14 agribusinesses and academia. The -- ASHCA's mission is
15 to proactively address ongoing and merging occupational
16 health and safety issues affecting US agriculture.

17 A guiding principle of ASHCA is the belief
18 that a hazard free and healthy agricultural work force
19 contributes to increase productivity and decrease costs,
20 leading to an improved standing in the global market.

21 ASHCA believes the agricultural industry has a
22 responsibility to help facilitate the adoption of best

1 management practices that reduce injuries and deaths on
2 our nation's farms and ranches.

3 In the proposal there are several important
4 topics that were addressed -- or would address the needs
5 of beginning farmers and ranchers, including risk
6 management education. ASHCA recommends that you
7 specifically include work safety and health as one of
8 those topics in the BFRDP.

9 Typically, within the USDA and CSREES, the
10 term risk management education is used to reference
11 economic risks, marketing strategies, crop insurance,
12 crop diversity, disaster preparedness, labor shortages
13 and the like, without a specific mention of worker safety
14 and health. Work injury issues are overlooked as a topic
15 of interest in request for proposals. Ideally the
16 inclusion of safety and health would be an invaluable
17 component of the BFRDP grant proposal.

18 Injury data suggests that beginning farmers
19 and ranchers have several characteristics. They have
20 smaller acreages, they have older machines, and that's
21 associated with a higher rate of injury. Some beginning
22 farmers are also parents of young children requiring

1 safety measures above and beyond expectations for adult
2 workers. Even conservative estimates of the cost of
3 farm-related fatalities, and injuries, and disease
4 suggests that the agricultural safety and health problem
5 is a \$5 billion issue. Losses of this scale reduce our
6 economic competitiveness in the global market.
7 Investments in safety and health have been a proven
8 return on those investments.

9 ASHCA believes -- firmly believes that
10 agricultural work, safety and health is an important
11 issue that needs increased attention with the CSREES
12 Program. Just last week we heard a story of a 25-year-
13 old farmer who lost his life during harvest. And, so, he
14 must have been a beginning farmer or he hadn't -- he
15 couldn't have been farming long. So, it is an issue that
16 affects beginning farmers.

17 Specifically work safety and health as a grant
18 project component is one way to help bring this about.
19 Thank you for the opportunity to share these comments.

20 DR. HIPPI: Traci Bruckner.

21 TRACI BRUCKNER: Good morning, afternoon. I
22 don't know where we are today, but... My name is Traci

1 Bruckner. I'm the assistant director of the Policy
2 Program at the Center for Rural Affairs. The Center for
3 Rural Affairs has a long history of working directly with
4 beginning farmers and ranchers, as well as advocating for
5 federal policy that better serves their interest. We
6 also work on developing value-added enterprises, direct
7 marketing, and we've also been doing a lot of organic
8 farmer education for beginning farmers and ranchers.

9 We have been advocating for this program for a
10 number of years. We advocated for it to get into the
11 2002 Farm Bill. We didn't get the funding attached to
12 it. We are absolutely delighted that the funding is
13 finally there. And a big thanks really goes out to
14 Congressman Peterson and his staff, as well as Senator
15 Harkin and their staff. Without their efforts this
16 program really wouldn't have come to the point where it
17 is today.

18 So, in addressing the coming rules for the
19 programing and the RFA, I wanted to touch on a few
20 items. One of those is the priorities for the program.
21 You've heard a lot of this already, but I agree and
22 concur with the other people that have stated that there

1 should be a priority placed on proposals that are led by
2 or have a strong holding place for nonprofits and
3 community-based organizations that have expertise, and
4 certainly beginning farmers and ranchers. We also need
5 to leave room, though, for those organizations that are
6 just building that capacity. I can think of one example
7 in South Dakota, Dakota Rural Action, they don't have an
8 official beginning farmer program, but they have really
9 had a lot of expertise in serving family, farmer, and
10 rancher issues, and I think we need to leave room for
11 that capacity building.

12 We should also place a priority on proposals
13 that seek to assist beginning farmers and ranchers with
14 establishing and developing high-value niche markets and
15 sustainable ag based farming and ranching systems.

16 Our experience at the center has shown that
17 these marketing systems are the most profitable and
18 present the greatest opportunity to get a new generation
19 started successfully in agriculture. This also relates
20 to marketing farming systems that support family-scale
21 operations. Aimee Witteman touched on this earlier.
22 This program should really support projects that present

1 a structure in agriculture that's conducive to creating
2 increased opportunity for small and mid-sized family
3 operations, rather than projects that focus solely on
4 conventional systems that don't present always the
5 greatest opportunities, and are often representative of
6 consolidated markets.

7 And I can speak to this from experience, not
8 as a policy want, but as a farmer. My husband and I used
9 to farm and I've been there and I know what it's like to
10 try and be a conventional farmer in a consolidated
11 agricultural environment. It's not the easiest world.

12 And, like I said earlier, we should also look
13 at proposals that help farmers and ranchers navigate the
14 hurdles to accessing land and credit. That should be
15 part of any training or mentoring programs that are out
16 there.

17 In regards to the education teams and the
18 clearing house, I touched on this earlier, too, that we
19 would like to see more of a scoping project first to see
20 what is out there, what the gaps are, how we can fill
21 those gaps. And nonprofits and community-based
22 organizations, with expertise in developing types of

1 curriculum that have been successful, should be a big
2 part of helping that scoping project.

3 Then for the clearing house, the one concern
4 we have with the clearing house, is if it's designed to
5 go above and beyond sharing the outcome-based results
6 that are produced through grants funded under this
7 program, we believe it would be detrimental to the
8 program, as well as to organizations serving beginning
9 farmers and ranchers that are seeking to further their
10 outreach in education efforts to even more beginning
11 farmers and ranchers. If this proposal -- if the
12 clearing house would preclude other organizations from
13 including online web-based outreach to beginning farmers
14 and ranchers. For example, at the center our beginning
15 farmer web pages are typically the most important on our
16 website. They're more popular than our home page. They
17 represent a quarter of all visits to our website. We
18 directly respond to and serve roughly over 400 farmers
19 each year that contact us for information regarding how
20 they can get started in farming. And I would say 95
21 percent of those requests are coming from beginning
22 farmers and ranchers that want to develop sustainable,

1 high-value niche market farming systems. They know that
2 that's probably their best way, that they can start small
3 with limited amounts of debt and be more profitable.

4 So, we think that, if you are going to do a
5 clearing house, that it shouldn't preclude other
6 organizations from including online web-based outreach in
7 their proposals.

8 And then for the clearing house itself, I
9 think people have touched on this earlier, too, that it
10 would be useful to think of working with ATTRA and
11 coordinating with them, rather than spending lots of time
12 and resources on creating a whole new venue.

13 And one thing, too, where I think how this
14 program could also help leverage other things, is
15 information that's gathered on successful models and
16 projects through funded proposals that include financial
17 literacy and training, that through FSA borrower there's
18 a borrower training component that's required for people
19 who borrow from FSA. They -- I think people have
20 developed successful training and mentoring projects that
21 include borrower training, financial literacy, those
22 types of things, should be funneled to FSA and approved

1 as appropriate curriculum for their borrower training
2 program. So, I think that's one way we can leverage
3 those things.

4 We'll be submitting more formal comments to
5 you in November. We have many more things to discuss
6 with you. And we're very excited. We thank you for this
7 opportunity. And I don't think this program could be in
8 better hands at the administrative level, so, we thank
9 you for all the work you're doing.

10 DR. HIPPE: Andrew Marshall.

11 ANDREW MARSHALL: Hi there. My name is Andrew
12 Marshall. I'm the educational programs director --
13 excuse me -- I'm the educational programs director at the
14 Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association. We're
15 based in Unity, Maine. And I'm also a owner and operator
16 of a small family farm in Forest Products Business in
17 Montville, Maine. I'm very grateful for the opportunity
18 to speak today. And I'm also really excited by the
19 potential that this program has to address what is in, in
20 my opinion and MOFGA's opinion, one of the most important
21 challenges facing the agricultural community, and us as
22 agricultural service providers, and that is the

1 recruitment, training, and support of new and beginning
2 farmers. And my own work is largely dedicated to this
3 effort. And, so, I'm delighted that the Congress and --
4 has supported this in recognizing the importance, and
5 that the USDA is going to implement this program.

6 And I understand that my time is limited, so,
7 I thought I would take my time to just make two major
8 observations. Number one, is that we at MOFGA really
9 think that the best place to train new farmers is on
10 farms. And the best people to do that training are the
11 farmers themselves. And, so, the preponderance of
12 MOFGA's Educational Programs are really based on that
13 model, that farmer-to-farmer model that other people have
14 mentioned here. And we put an enormous amount of stock
15 in the knowledge of farmers, and in their ability to
16 transfer that knowledge to new and beginning farmers.

17 So, we have a couple of major initiatives that
18 are built on that for new farmers. One is an
19 apprenticeship program, which we attract about 85 to 90
20 apprentices per year. And essentially we recruit farmers
21 to train them. So, it's a very diffused, decentralized
22 program in which we put -- we help to place apprentices

1 on working farms in the State of Maine. And in this
2 situation that's really sort of embodying the learning by
3 doing the emersion model. And this is a case in which
4 the farmer is the primary teacher and instructor of these
5 folks.

6 And we think this model is valuable and
7 effective; however, farmers need support in order to be
8 good teachers. Just because you're a really good farmer
9 and you have a lot of experience does not necessarily
10 make you an excellent teacher or communicator of
11 information. And, so, we see -- we at MOFGA have
12 designed or programing in order to support those farmers
13 and give them the support and resources that they need in
14 order to be good mentors and teachers, but we also see an
15 enormous need for more of these sorts of resources to
16 train farmers to be good teachers.

17 All right. And so do apprentices. So, we
18 also see a real need for sort of more structure and more
19 formalized structure around our -- in apprenticeship --
20 in the -- within the model of apprenticeship. Okay.

21 So, I see a couple of different ways that we
22 could prioritize this. And one is sort of the

1 development of better tools and resources to help farmers
2 be better teachers, as I said. And another one is to
3 develop more formal training components within the
4 apprenticeship context through things like innovative
5 partnerships with existing educational institutions. And
6 in my region in the northeast this is happening, but it
7 needs a lot more support.

8 So -- and the second point I wanted to make,
9 was it's been made before. And it's sort of the elephant
10 in the living room, and that's this enormous challenges
11 that new farmers face gaining access to capital, and land
12 especially. And I think that the best use of these
13 resources would be to focus on initiatives that really
14 have the whole package in mind. So, they're providing
15 services and training to new farmers, but they're also
16 trying to shepherd those new farmers through this maze of
17 gaining access to land and capital, and using innovative,
18 new strategies to put farmers on the land, and to get
19 them the capital that they need to finance their
20 operations. Okay.

21 And, so, things like close linkages between
22 training organizations and land linking organizations.

1 And we in Maine are in the process of developing a
2 memorandum of understanding with our -- with the local
3 FarmLink to do such a thing. And I see that that
4 initiative would be a great model.

5 And also -- and this has also been mentioned,
6 other creative arrangements that get farmers on the land,
7 such as incubator farms. There's -- MOFGA itself has a
8 small incubator farm where we actually provide land,
9 housing, some access to equipment, and some financing for
10 a farmer. We make a two-year commitment to that person
11 to try to get -- help them get their legs under them.
12 And I think this is a very nice model.

13 So, it seems like time is up. And, again, I
14 appreciate the opportunity and I look forward to the
15 program. Thank you.

16 DR. HIPPE: Bridget Holcomb.

17 BRIDGET HOLCOMB: Good morning. My name is
18 Bridget Holcomb. I'm with Michael Fields Agricultural
19 Institute. We're a Wisconsin based nonprofit dedicated
20 to promoting sustainable agriculture through education,
21 and research, and policy. And the education portion of
22 that includes over a decade of training beginning

1 farmers, and helping those beginning farmers access land.

2 In addition to this expertise, we've also
3 recently did extensive interviews with people wanting to
4 get into farming, people who have just begun their
5 farming operations, and beginning farmer educators. So,
6 what I want to present to you today are the three main
7 points of what we're hearing on the ground of what the
8 priorities for this program should be.

9 The first is, the number one obstacle for
10 beginning farmers, which has been said many times today,
11 which is access to capital, and the need for creative
12 ways to build capital. Beginning farmers and beginning
13 farmer educators alike are saying it's important to start
14 slowly and build up an operation over a number of years.
15 And because of that, that's where the education needs to
16 be. It -- the education needs to be, how do you do
17 that? How do you build capital while ramping up in
18 operation?

19 In the manager's statement, it refers to this
20 as asset-based farming opportunity strategies. And it
21 includes financial management training, acquisition and
22 management of agriculture credit, and innovative farm and

1 ranch transfer strategies. And I also just want to point
2 out, that inherent in this is the need for multiple -- is
3 the need to focus on multiple-year grants, that as
4 operations ramp up and build, the education needs to be
5 there to support them.

6 The second point that I'd like to make is the
7 second biggest obstacle that we hear, which has been said
8 many times today as well, access to land, and the need
9 for nontraditional land agreements. We -- there are many
10 beginning farmers who -- for which buying farmland is not
11 an option or is not the best option. And they're looking
12 for alternative ways to access that farmland.

13 Now, on the other hand, we have retiring
14 farmers and absentee landowners and other landowners who
15 are looking for people to farm their land and who would
16 be very interested in supporting beginning farmers. And
17 what is missing here is the ability to connect those two
18 groups, which have been done -- which has been done in
19 California FarmLink, but much more education is necessary
20 for both of these groups. The education is needed, not
21 only in these nontraditional land agreements, but also
22 the risks associated with them. And by extension the --

1 another group needs to be educated for these
2 nontraditional land agreements, which is the education of
3 lenders.

4 In the legislation, one of the competitive
5 grant areas is land leasing contracts. And this could be
6 one of the most effective ways to produce new farmers.

7 The last point that I would like to make is
8 that -- is fairly obvious, but needs to be stated, which
9 is beginning farmers have multiple needs. The farmer --
10 beginning farmers need practical training. They need
11 business training. They need marketing training. And
12 then they need information on the obstacles that we've
13 talked about today, like access to capital and access to
14 land. So, preference should be given to organizations
15 and partnerships that have the capacity to address these
16 multiple needs.

17 In the legislation the evaluation criteria
18 referred to the expertise and track record of one or more
19 of the applicants. And one of the good ways -- one good
20 way to measure expertise and track records is the ability
21 to address the multiple issues facing beginning farmers.
22 And if I have just a moment more, I'd like to go back to

1 your question about: How can this money be optimized?

2 I'd just like to say that focusing on
3 materials and focusing on web-based materials in
4 particular are good for people who have Internet access
5 and are good for people who think in that way. But
6 really the way that we would get more beginning farmers
7 on the land and in successful operations is to place a
8 larger emphasis on on-the-ground farmer-to-farmer
9 interaction. So, thank you, very much.

10 DR. HIPPI: Does anyone else have a desire to
11 come forward and give us some comment about priority?

12 LISA KIVIRIST: This is Lisa Kivirist at Inn
13 Serendipity. Just a real specific thing, when we're
14 talking about web-based training tools. It's not only
15 just lack of Internet access in rural areas, it's lack of
16 high speed Internet access. I mean, we just got DSL in
17 County P (ph) last year. Whew. Whew. And when we look
18 at these training modules, if it is -- it can still be
19 online, but still addressing dial-up, which 20 percent of
20 our country -- and that's primarily rural areas -- is
21 still on. So, it's just looking at that specifically as
22 we move on with this, because that's a big issue of

1 just -- not access, but the -- whatever. How fast it
2 comes access.

3 DR. HIPPI: Anyone else on priorities?

4 JOHN MANGUS: John Mangus with Custom Ag
5 Solutions. There was a point made on the -- with
6 prioritization, and also kind of to the, I guess, some of
7 the earlier questions as far as the -- how this team
8 stuff works, and then meeting -- frankly some of the
9 educational team stuff is a little confusing to me. It
10 almost seems like CSREES is supposed to assemble these
11 teams to make that happen. And I think what makes more
12 sense is to allow those proposals to come in and then
13 have -- and basically structure the RFA so that people
14 form those teams kind of on their own. Otherwise, I
15 mean, you're -- I don't know if you're going to have a
16 draft and put the -- you know, Washington State with --
17 you know, with some other entity and stuff like that. I
18 mean, those kind of have to come together of their own --
19 you know, of people's own interest and expertise.

20 And to that end there was a discussion about
21 some kind of a scoping project being a lead thing. I
22 don't think that's a good idea. It could delay getting

1 this stuff going. And, I mean, it could delay it a lot.
2 And, if there's a scoping effort that needs to be done,
3 let it be done. Let -- put that in the request for
4 proposals. Say, some people have mentioned a need to
5 scope and we would, you know, like to include some
6 proposals that maybe address that, but let the other
7 stuff go. I really believe the market -- if you want to
8 call it a market, whatever -- I think people will step
9 up. And if California has an interest in doing a certain
10 organic thing, then there will be proposals for that. If
11 somebody else has a -- some ideas about doing a scoping
12 to see what tools are available to underserved producers
13 in the southeast, there will be a proposal for that.

14 So, while you might set up some targets, leave
15 some open to say, you know, here's the general framework,
16 but bring the proposals. I mean, we might be surprised
17 at what we get.

18 So, while there might be some targets or some
19 areas of emphasis, I would also suggest -- and I think
20 RMA has done a good job of that -- within those ten
21 regions that I had talked about earlier, they will
22 actually say here -- one priority, for instance, is

1 cherries in California, but they also leave it open to
2 say, if there are other ideas, we're going to leave a
3 certain number of the funding opportunities wide open
4 just to get people's ideas on that.

5 So, again, I -- you know, anything that would
6 delay this I don't think is a good idea. And I think
7 really the people are going to fill in on some of this
8 stuff. And then next year, if there's a gap, wow, we
9 still don't know what's available for southeast
10 underserved producers, put that as a target, and somebody
11 will step up and hit that target.

12 But in terms of a standard stand-alone
13 scoping, again, if it delays in any way -- and also it
14 could be so large. I mean, it's a huge country with tons
15 of different crops and different types of producers. I
16 say let the market, in a sense -- again, the people who
17 are going to be putting in these proposals, let them fill
18 those gaps.

19 STEVE SCHWARTZ: I can't remember everyone
20 wanting to comment so much at a meeting before. But in
21 terms of priorities, I think one important thing is that
22 priorities are not, you know, black or white. We don't

1 want to see check boxes. Okay. Do they have
2 partnerships? Do they have organic farmers involved? Do
3 they have -- you know, it's a continuum, a point system.
4 The stronger programs have more experience will get more
5 points on -- for that category, and another one might
6 have a stronger point on partnerships.

7 We -- so, we want to -- I mean, you've heard a
8 couple mantras today -- or recommended mentorships or --
9 and others, and curriculum, but for me the key thing is
10 technical assistance. You know, I've -- whether you're
11 talking about helping a person apply for a loan, or
12 helping them follow through on getting a written lease
13 instead of a verbal lease, it takes time. It takes
14 one-on-one time with someone who has the people skills
15 and the technical expertise to work with them, hopefully
16 at their farm, hopefully in a language that they're
17 proficient in. And if it is a client who's limited
18 English proficiency, it's going to take more time and
19 maybe hire in a consultant to work with them.

20 So, technical assistance, I mean, there's a
21 lot of great curriculum out there. There's a lot of
22 great teachers out there. But for our program, when we

1 offer a four-hour training, the goal is mainly to attract
2 -- to find out the clients in that county that are ready
3 to step up and take advantage of these services and that
4 we're going to work with afterwards to do the 10 hours,
5 or the 15 hours it takes to help them move from a written
6 -- a verbal lease, or a handshake, to something that's --
7 really protects them. So, going that next step after the
8 easy to count trainings is -- should receive priorities.

9 I think in this first round you want to also
10 give prioritization to programs that are positioned to
11 have successes in the first year, because this is a year,
12 especially, that we're trying to build momentum with this
13 program so it is around and -- when Senate appropriations
14 committees are looking at things. That's -- let's see --
15 well, I'll leave it at that. Thanks.

16 DR. HIPPE: Djime.

17 DJIME ADOUM: You know, I don't always have
18 planning and accountability. I really do praise you on a
19 hill, Doctor. I mean, all of a sudden my antennas go
20 up. Somebody said 20 percent of folks out there are on
21 dial-up. All right. And you guys are going to be
22 tailoring to beginning farmers and ranchers. That

1 basically means -- I mean, I'm going to ask a question:
2 Can someone write a proposal that, say, hey, I'm going to
3 start with putting together a YFI providing a much
4 larger, in terms of Internet access, for those people who
5 are on dial-up. We're not saying blanket the whole
6 country, but at a minimum you have a base line. That
7 says 20 percent of people are on dial-up. And you know
8 nowadays they develop a lot of programs that require a
9 lot more in much larger pipes than dial-up.

10 So, is there any problem, any limitation with
11 tailoring to the needs of those 20 percent, when we're
12 talking about access to information. We're talking about
13 all kind of these things. That is a niche. Can someone
14 take a look at it and see whether or not those guys can
15 actually be helped a little better than just keeping them
16 going, investing a lot of time and resource elsewhere?
17 Thank you.

18 DR. HIPPIE: Anyone else on priorities?

19 Okay. We're moving into the last area, which
20 is issues which include, not only to the priorities, but
21 administration issues. So, if Zachariah Baker is still
22 here. No.

1 DR. SURESHWARAN: He's here.

2 ZACHARIAH BAKER: Good afternoon. Thank you
3 for the opportunity to provide testimony at this
4 session. My name is Zach Baker. And I work with the
5 Organic Farming Research Foundation, an organization that
6 has been at the forefront of insuring farmers, having all
7 they need to successfully farm using organic methods.

8 Organic farming, which relies on the complex
9 interaction of ecological processes, instead of the use
10 of synthetic pesticides and other unsustainable
11 practices. It's particularly management intensive,
12 demanding a great deal of knowledge and skill from the
13 farmer and rancher. Yet, when implemented and managed
14 correctly, organic systems can provide multiple benefits
15 for the environment, human health, and rural communities,
16 protecting water quality, mitigating and adopting to
17 climate change, improving the health of the soil,
18 enhancing biodiversity, supporting pollinator health,
19 decreasing human and wildlife exposure to harmful
20 pesticides, and providing a way for farmers to make a
21 living. These are the benefits that have motivated more
22 than 10,000 farmers in the US to produce organically, and

1 have captured the attention of a new generation of
2 farmers.

3 California FarmLink recognizes a leading
4 organization in cultivating a new generation of farmers
5 and ranchers. In support of that, 80 percent of the
6 beginning farmers and ranchers that come to them for
7 services are committed to organic or sustainable
8 agriculture.

9 Whether it is desired to use farming practices
10 they were brought up with in other countries where inputs
11 necessary for a conventional production were not
12 available, or farm workers looking to start their own
13 farm without using damaging synthetic pesticides that may
14 have caused themselves, their friends, or loved ones harm,
15 or veterans looking to farm as another service to their
16 country, or those who hold the belief that their role as
17 stewards of the land should be to leave the land as well
18 off, if not in a better condition, than they found it.
19 Beginning farmers and ranchers and are looking to organic
20 farming as the answer.

21 At the same time consumers, motivated by many
22 of the same health and environmental concerns of

1 beginning farmers and ranchers, have been consistently
2 voting with their dollars for organic agriculture. Sales
3 of organic products have been growing at 20 percent a
4 year for more than a decade. The organic share of the
5 domestic food retail market is currently approaching 4
6 percent, and it's expected to go to 10 percent by 2012 or
7 the next Farm Bill. Yet despite this huge market
8 opportunity, a gap in education and information about
9 organic farming systems, especially for beginning organic
10 farmers, has caused farmers not to be able to take
11 advantage of this opportunity. The Beginning Farmer and
12 Rancher Development Program can bring this gap.

13 Congress, recognizing the market opportunity
14 organic agriculture represents for farmers and ranchers,
15 and the public benefits of organic agriculture, included
16 a number of programs to support organic farmers and those
17 looking to transition to organic agriculture in the 2008
18 Farm Bill.

19 The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development
20 Program is and must be a part of this effort to reinvent
21 US agriculture by encouraging and creating a new
22 generation of organic farmers. The Beginning Farmer and

1 Rancher Development Program must fund projects that
2 support beginning farmers and ranchers producing
3 organically. Priorities should be given to those
4 projects that include mentoring and farmer-to-farmer
5 education.

6 Organic farmers who have built their knowledge
7 of organic systems with limited help from federal
8 support, compared to their conventional counterparts, are
9 a wealth of knowledge and experience for those farmers
10 just starting out.

11 A number of other grant purposes in the
12 legislative language are particularly important for
13 organic. Certified organic land is a prized commodity.
14 It takes three years for land to become certified organic
15 ensuring that organic land does not lose its status when
16 farmers retire is key to keeping organic land in
17 production, and for beginning farmers and ranchers
18 looking to farm organically, not having to go through
19 what can be a very challenging three-year transition
20 process.

21 As a result, projects relating to the grant
22 purposes, C, assisting beginning farmers and ranchers in

1 acquiring land from retiring farmers and ranchers; and,
2 D, innovative farm and ranch transfer strategies that
3 support the transfer of organic land, are critical.

4 Other grant purposes, such as whole farm
5 planning, key to organic farming. Risk management
6 education, that also takes into account alternative
7 strategies used by organic farmers, such as community-
8 supported agriculture schemes. And we heard earlier
9 about a trouble with coverage of organic crops, making
10 sure that those risk management strategies are taken into
11 account.

12 Conservation assistance to enhance the
13 environmental benefits of organic systems, and
14 diversification and marketing strategies are all
15 critically important for the success of organic farmers.

16 In guidance around making new grants, the
17 Organic Farming Research Foundation supports the
18 statement in the legislative language, that the secretary
19 shall give priority to partnerships and collaborations
20 that are led by or include nongovernmental and community-
21 based organizations with expertise in new agricultural
22 producer trainings and outreach.

1 In the absence of in depth USDA expertise on
2 organic agriculture, organic farmers and ranchers have
3 relied on nongovernmental organizations and community-
4 based organizations to get the knowledge and technical
5 assistance they need to successfully farm organically.
6 Many of these organizations also have the site specific
7 knowledge necessary for implementing successful organic
8 systems in the diverse geographic areas of the country.

9 Projects funded through the BFRDP Program
10 should build upon the existing wisdom and program of
11 these organizations.

12 In summary, organic agriculture represents an
13 exciting and beneficial opportunity for beginning farmers
14 and ranchers. And the Beginning Farmer and Rancher
15 Development Program should support and encourage the
16 entry of a new generation of farmers and ranchers into
17 organic production. Ensuring that a person on the grant
18 review panel includes a person with expertise in organic
19 agriculture, will assist CSREES in identifying the most
20 worthy organic-related proposals.

21 As USDA undertakes new efforts to support
22 organic agriculture agency wide, the BFRDP Program will

1 be an integral part of this work, augmenting and
2 enhancing it.

3 The payoff for getting a new generation of
4 farmers into organic farming will be seen in a healthy
5 environment, healthy children, and productive soils for
6 future generations to come. I, and the Organic Farming
7 Research Foundation, look forward to that future. Thank
8 you.

9 DR. HIPPIE: Cliff Parker.

10 CLIFTON PARKER: Good afternoon, everyone.
11 I'm here today representing Custom Ag Solutions, me,
12 myself, and John Mangus. But I just retired from risk
13 management agency where I had the opportunity they've got
14 right now to try to come up with all these panel members,
15 because I was the director for four years at Risk
16 Management Education Division. And I was also head of
17 our outreach over at RMA for a while, our Civil Rights
18 Council, which also worked on the outreach agreements and
19 started outreach programs that are at RMA right now.

20 There's several things that I wanted to bring
21 up. I was sitting there -- I didn't come here with no
22 planned notes. I told John -- John wanted me to come

1 with him today. I also work with several other groups,
2 Land Loss Prevention. Some of you all may have worked
3 with that before. Stewardship, I know they said they had
4 worked with Savvy Horns Groups Land Loss Prevention,
5 which is a nonprofit organization, also North Carolina
6 Coalition of Rural and Farm Families. One thing I've
7 noticed in this agreement that I'm a little bit edgy
8 about, is it keeps saying nonprofits and all these other
9 things. One thing to look at, there is some small
10 for-profit businesses out there that operate just as
11 efficient, if in some cases more efficient, and reach
12 out, as far as -- so, I don't know whether reading this
13 you can interpret one of the problems with statutes.
14 They can be interpreted, and a lot of times they're
15 interpreted by attorneys, and they sway you one way or
16 the other one on that. But I would hope you all would
17 leave that open that also for-profit businesses can also
18 -- small for-profit businesses can also do RFPs on this
19 agreement.

20 One thing that I've also noticed through my
21 years, I've always been an advocate for new and beginning
22 farmers, because I felt like all my life I should have

1 been a farmer, one of those new and beginning farmers,
2 because I was raised on a family farm in North Carolina.
3 And I heard somebody talking about tobacco quotas and all
4 that. We were raised on a tobacco farm, but we did a lot
5 of other diversified agriculture. But I left the farm
6 because it wasn't exciting. Nobody excited me about
7 farming. So, I left farming and went into USDA and
8 agriculture, because I like the ag field. That's
9 happening a lot, guys. I mean, we've talked a lot about
10 organics. We've talked a lot about a lot of niche
11 markets. Those are great. Organics, niche markets are
12 wonderful. I'm 100 percent supporter of them. We do
13 organic farming on part of our farm. We've got about a
14 20-acre segment of our farm that's separated from the
15 rest of the farm and the guys farm it organically -- or
16 there's a husband and wife team that's doing it
17 organically.

18 But we also need to be thinking about our
19 conventional agriculture. We're losing all those
20 farmers, too. And there's a lot of people that are
21 interested in ag, but there's no way for them to really
22 get started. And what makes it even more concerning to

1 me, is not just getting started, a lot of them are
2 there. They're own the farm and they're doing like I did
3 30 years ago, they're leaving for a big government job,
4 or to be a doctor, or a lawyer, which are all very good
5 things. But we need to keep that in mind. And, so, some
6 of these things need to be targeted toward FFA students.
7 I've worked a lot with the FFA, be on the -- been a judge
8 on the Star Farmer, the Placement Farmer and all of that,
9 past president of the -- of a chapter of FFA. And I
10 think that's very interesting. The only place you can
11 really get young people is when they're young, because
12 when they get old, they're not young people anymore
13 they're old people. So, you got to catch them while
14 they're young. And if you really want to get in their
15 hearts, you've got to get them while they're young and
16 talk to them. You cannot teach a 75-year-old man to love
17 basketball. If he's an ACC basketball fan, he's been
18 loving it all his life. So, what you need to do with
19 these FFA Programs -- and we do a lot of work with that
20 with Custom Ag. I did a lot of work with it with RMA
21 through the years. I think it's very, very important
22 that we hit these young kids through FFA. That's one.

1 There's a lot of other organizations 4-H, a lot of other
2 things, but FFA is a big one. A lot of your livestock
3 organizations, which I was really -- I don't know whether
4 it was -- what's the word used for it, but I was sort of
5 disappointed I didn't hear anything from any livestock
6 people today at all. There's really -- that's another
7 thing that we need to talk with a lot of these young guys
8 are out there wanting to be interested in livestock --
9 really interested, but had no way to get started.

10 So, now, to hit on some administrative
11 things. I really applaud you all for having this meeting
12 today, because it's a very tough thing. I was in our
13 seat just a few year ago before I retired I was in your
14 seat. And it's good to hear what everybody says. And
15 sometimes you don't hear it. So, you don't have a
16 meeting place so you don't have to listen to your
17 comments. So, I applaud these people for having this
18 meeting, listening to your comments, and now they can
19 address those. And we can always say, we told you so if
20 they don't.

21 And another thing, I don't want -- I would
22 hate to see any time -- any limits on the amount of

1 agreements. All -- any kind of limits you put out there,
2 it just puts yourself in another hassle. Believe me.
3 Been there. And regional, when you start setting
4 regional boundaries, somebody is going to go on this side
5 and you're going to have deny an agreement. It may been
6 the best one you have. So, those are things just to
7 think about.

8 My last comment is, online is wonderful but
9 nobody farms online. We farm in the field. Keep that in
10 mind. Farmers are hands-on people. That's the reason
11 they're not government cronies like I was for 30 years.
12 They're out there working in the field. So, the online
13 stuff is great, but don't ever exclude -- hands on is the
14 biggest, and as far as I'm concerned, the very best way
15 for education. Thank you.

16 DR. HIPPI: Jimmy.

17 JIMMY HENNING: Thank you. As I said before,
18 my name is Jimmy Henning. And I represent today --
19 actually I'm wearing a couple of hats, the University of
20 Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, and also speaking
21 on behalf of -- I'm bringing some comments on behalf of
22 the Extension Service Directors of the Southern Region.

1 That's 13 states and two territories. That, I guess,
2 John, qualifies me as the mother ship. So, we're glad to
3 be here and glad to provide some comments on the
4 Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program.

5 First of all, congratulations on getting it
6 funded. I think it's tremendous to see the interest in
7 promoting the continuous of agriculture in this country,
8 and working at the ground level, because I do think that
9 people farm in the ground, not online. However, I think
10 we need to have the maximum number of avenues to reach
11 those individuals, whether it's whether they learn across
12 the table, across the kitchen table, or broadband,
13 however they do it.

14 My first comment really goes back to the scope
15 of the institutions that are allowed to apply. And I
16 welcome the fact that we need to have a broad diversity
17 and the maximum number of good ideas. I would just call
18 your attention to the fact that the Cooperative Extension
19 Service is already a considerable investment of USDA, and
20 that the investment is leveraged many, many times with
21 county and state funds. And Kentucky right now it's
22 about nine to one. Every federal dollar is leveraged

1 about nine times with local, county, and state
2 information -- or funds.

3 We would -- we like to think that our programs
4 are not one shot. They are continuing, and they have a
5 significant amount of follow up and also face-to-face
6 time with producers, which we've said many times today,
7 is a key to success.

8 We have a network of people across counties.
9 We are locally driven. And I think that's also key to,
10 how do you impact beginning farmers and ranchers? So, we
11 would ask that CSREES include as part of their criteria
12 for a proposal, how well successful organizations tap
13 into, and maximize, and use the Cooperative Extension
14 Service networking, including using us as viable partner.

15 Speaking to the guideline that talks about the
16 nongovernmental organizations and priorities to -- or
17 letting priority -- let those organizations take the lead
18 or be a part of these programs. We also say again, that
19 we think it's great to have the maximum number of ideas,
20 the maximum number of players that have expertise in new
21 farmer or beginning farmer training and support. But we
22 would say, we would hope that that's not to the exclusion

1 of the Cooperative Extension Service. What we would
2 hope, is that in your specifications that you look for
3 real partnerships. Those partnerships where the
4 relationships are established and, frankly, follow the
5 money. If you've got a good relationship established, it
6 ought to play itself out in a track record and a
7 history. And it also ought to show up in that proposal
8 as an appropriately shared budget.

9 My third point, and it really speaks back to
10 this idea of, how do you maximize the investment that
11 you're fixing to make in beginning farmers and ranchers?
12 What I would like to encourage the agency to do, is to
13 reward those proposals that can make the case that their
14 proposal supports a sustained effort, not a one-shot come
15 in, do your thing, and leave, but that they have the
16 capacity, they have the vision, they have the foresight
17 for what's going to happen when you do walk out the door,
18 or when that first training episode is over. I think
19 that's a very crucial part of having the impact I think
20 you want this program to have.

21 A couple of other points that we have found
22 working with beginning farmers and ranchers for decades,

1 and that is they do not organize themselves in one group,
2 and that effective educational efforts don't start and
3 stop at the same point in time.

4 I would like to address, for a second, the 25
5 percent set aside rule, and that is somewhat
6 problematic. What I would suggest that you would look at
7 is making a guideline that says, rather than targeting
8 particular people, or -- I think you ought to do that,
9 but do that by making every grant recipient show the way
10 that they're going to allocate 25 percent of their funds
11 to reaching that target audience.

12 In summary, I would like to make -- to
13 emphasize my one big idea, and that is that I think that
14 this program ought to emphasize partnerships. We've
15 heard it many, many times today. I would like to say
16 also that I would like to -- that priority ought to be
17 given to those partnerships that tapped into existing
18 networks in extension. I feel like we have an existing
19 network. We are locally driven. We have a county
20 presence. We have trust and -- at the local level, and
21 we feel like we would be a willing and able partner. We
22 would like to be a real partner based on shared vision,

1 based on shared budgets, and that your proposals should
2 be rewarded for those that emphasize the sustainability
3 of their programs. Thank you for the chance to comment.

4 DR. HIPPE: Any other comments on the public
5 administration?

6 KENT SCHESCKE: Kent Schescke with National
7 FFA. I would like to echo the comments of the previous
8 speaker, that it is important that you use existing
9 networks out there, because, again, the huge leverage
10 investment.

11 I would like to make a similar comment. Our
12 11,000 teachers out there, 90 percent of the cost basis
13 of operating those programs is born by local school
14 districts. And they're there to serve indeed in that
15 local community. So, we bring that to the table, in
16 terms of offering our network to help deliver some of
17 these programs.

18 The other thing that I want to comment on, is
19 I think it's great that you're looking at multiple-year
20 programs. My only concern is, is that when you're trying
21 to get people established in agriculture, three years may
22 not be long enough. And I think for this initial round

1 that's probably good, but I think maybe the thing that we
2 need to look about is long-term approaches to it, because
3 three years may not be long enough to demonstrate
4 success.

5 I would also echo the comment that, stay away
6 from those programs which are, you know, very short term,
7 you know, the one-time wonder thing I think is an
8 appropriate comment.

9 And the other one, I think, was alluded to
10 earlier, and I was the one that talked about Internet
11 delivery, but I'm a huge proponent of lots of multiple
12 strategies, and the most effective strategy being the
13 one-on-one time that happens between whoever is
14 delivering the program and who is the recipient. And if
15 that is not an element of the delivery model, I don't
16 think it will be successful. So, I think there needs to
17 be multiple strategies of delivery. But remember the
18 most effective one is the long-term, one-on-one mentoring
19 supervision, whoever it's done by, that works with those
20 program recipients. Because, again, we're in a very
21 relationship-based industry.

22 DR. HIPPI: Anyone else? Any other comments

1 about anything in particular? We're ahead of time.

2 Traci, are you moving around like you're going to get up?

3 I'm going to start watching for little

4 movements and --

5 TRACI BRUCKNER: There's been several comments
6 about the online outreach and education. And the thing
7 that I wanted to add to that, is I, too, don't think it
8 should be a sole focus of the proposal. But young,
9 beginning farmers and ranchers, that's where they're
10 communicating and that's where they're reaching out to
11 find information and resources, is through the Internet.

12 We have a changing communication dynamic with
13 the young population and, so, I think we really need to
14 think about that. Where -- we need to meet people where
15 they are. And if they're looking for resources online,
16 we need to provide that online to them. But I also want
17 to say that that doesn't preclude the idea of doing the
18 farmer-to-farmer, face-to-face, one-on-one educational
19 theory type of mentoring with farmers and ranchers. That
20 cannot be replaced online.

21 But we need to -- if they're trying to find
22 information and resources online, we need to make sure

1 we're meeting them where they are.

2 DR. SURESHWARAN: Lots of these suggestions.

3 I just wanted to point out one thing. The legislation
4 specifies quite a lot of things for us. It says quite
5 simple, have a term limit that is no more than three
6 years. So, we are bound by that legislation.

7 QUINTON ROBINSON: Good morning. My name is
8 Quinton Robinson. I'm with the Rural Coalition. And
9 also I'm a board member of the North Carolina Land Loss
10 Prevention Project. And I just want to make a couple of
11 comments.

12 Seven years ago I wouldn't have agreed to the
13 set aside provision that's in this title -- that's in
14 this particular program. But now having worked in the
15 field with minority producers for about six years, this
16 set aside from a policy point of view and from a point of
17 view of sustaining minority producers, and number one --
18 and most importantly, rather, saving their farmland. It
19 was a must for us. And that's why we fought so hard for
20 it.

21 Because, like I said, before at the beginning
22 of my comments, seven years ago I wouldn't have supported

1 a set aside for this program. But maybe three very vivid
2 examples of having worked in the field, I thought this
3 was a must have. And that's why we pushed very hard for
4 this. So, I'll share a couple of them with you.

5 After -- I can't -- I think it -- I can't
6 remember the exact name of the hurricane down in
7 Homestead, Florida -- we took a group of advocates down
8 to work with the basic needs associated with the farm
9 workers. And what we found when we got down there, is
10 that probably 70 percent of those farm workers were
11 actually new and beginning farmers. And they actually
12 worked in some farm corporation for half of the day or
13 most of the day. And whatever daylight time that they
14 had remaining, they worked on their own farms and they
15 did sell product to -- I think it was Demaro (ph) Produce
16 House. And what we found was very disturbing, is that
17 when those farm workers went into the USDA Office to
18 apply for emergency conservation funds, they were
19 basically told that you -- you're not eligible because
20 you're not a producer. And, so, it's those type of
21 examples that we thought was important to sort of look
22 after those new and beginning Hispanic producers who were

1 just not getting any service -- and I'm not
2 exaggerating -- who were not getting any service. And,
3 in fact, who were been turned away from USDA.

4 And another example, this one happened to me
5 personally. I farm seven acres up in Aberdeen,
6 Maryland. And -- but I also work here in Washington,
7 DC. And, so, I personally went into an office in that
8 particular county. And the response was, we didn't even
9 know that there were any minority producers left. And
10 that's an isolated case, but I feel like from a policy
11 point of view, and when we look at the smaller limit of
12 resource producers, those that we have left -- and as
13 many of you know, the average age of the African American
14 producer is now approaching somewhere between 69 years.
15 And we really, really, have to focus on this program to
16 make sure that those new minority producers who want to
17 produce have the training to be business managers and
18 marketers, because that's what it's going to take for
19 them to survive.

20 And a lot of the groups that you are familiar
21 with here in the room have worked with these producers
22 and have experience making sure that they stay on the

1 land. And we want to very much be a part of working with
2 these programs to make sure that those youngsters can
3 enjoy the rural life like the rest of America. So, thank
4 you.

5 JIMMY HENNING: In light of those comments --
6 and I support those -- I'd like to make sure I clarify
7 the position of the southern region directors about the
8 25 percent set aside rule. We think it's a great idea.
9 What we would just hold up, is that we don't find a lot
10 of times that those limited resource, or smaller minority
11 producers, or beginning farmers and ranchers are
12 organized in one group. And, so, we felt like that as a
13 way to have more bang for the dollars that you have, that
14 require in every group that's funded, to reach out and
15 use 25 percent of their funding for that audience would
16 be a way to avoid what this last gentleman said happened
17 in that circumstance; but to make sure that everybody
18 that's working on this project is cognizant of that
19 audience and is making preparations to deal with it. So,
20 thank you for the time to clarify.

21 DR. HIPPE: Any other comments? Some of you
22 haven't gotten up yet, so, we encourage you to do that.

1 ZACHARIAH BAKER: Hi. Again, Zach Baker from
2 the Organic Farm and Research Foundation. I just wanted
3 to address a earlier comment that was made about organic,
4 in terms of being a niche market. And I just wanted to
5 point out that organic is the fastest growing sector of
6 American agriculture. And a lot of beginning farmers and
7 new farmers are looking at organic agriculture because of
8 the detrimental effects we've seen with conventional ag.
9 And, you know, as mentioned, it's hard to train a dog new
10 tricks. And that's why the Beginning Farmer and Rancher
11 Development Program is so key, because you get folks into
12 organic farming for the future. And a lot of the
13 information that's generated through the programs through
14 BFRDP supporting organic systems can help those
15 conventional farmers who are being lost and can move into
16 organic agriculture, which is the future of agriculture.
17 So, I'll leave it at that. Thanks.

18 DAN DURHEIM: All right, Jamie, I'll get up.
19 Good afternoon. My name is Dan Durham and I work for
20 the American Farm Bureau.

21 I think one of the biggest priorities that we
22 see that's happening with young farmers, I work directly

1 with the Young Farmer Rancher Program, which for us is
2 defined by 18 to 35 year olds, not specific to the number
3 of years that they've been farming, but rather that age.
4 I think one of the biggest things that we see happening
5 is this divisiveness in our industry around organic,
6 traditional, whatever it may be. I think that we have to
7 make sure in this program that we can support whatever it
8 is that they want to be able to produce.

9 And I think we all struggle with, what is this
10 word called sustainable? What does that mean? It means
11 something different for someone on an economic side
12 versus an environmental side. And I think we can come
13 together to be able to do that. And I see what we're
14 doing in Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development
15 Programs, is we have to be able to come together to do
16 that. We're only two percent of the whole population.
17 We can't continue to figure out ways that we divide each
18 other. We have to be able to believe in that efficiency,
19 whether it's organic, whether it's traditional, whether
20 it's something like that, because what we have to be able
21 to do is to feed the global market. That's where we
22 are. We can't just worry about what's happening in our

1 own communities.

2 And what we also see -- we saw in our
3 beginning farmer survey that we did in our young farmer
4 conference, which has been attracting about 800 to 850
5 young producers around the country each year. They do
6 want their farmers -- they want their children to come
7 back to those operations, but they want their operations
8 to be profitable. And we know, that as we see these
9 things evolve over time, people become involved in bigger
10 operations, sometimes because they want to bring more
11 people back to their operations. And at the same time I
12 firmly believe in efficiency, and if that efficiency
13 means organic, or it means traditional, that's where we
14 need to be in these programs. So, we need to fund all of
15 those pieces, and not just one side or the other.

16 DR. HIPPI: Anyone else? Okay.

17 BRIDGET HOLCOMB: Bridget Holcomb, Michael
18 Fields Agricultural Institute. To tag along on the
19 previous comments, without having -- without giving any
20 opinion of this organic versus conventional, and which
21 might be -- which might be better, I think we need to
22 look at why beginning farmers are more likely to look

1 into organic agriculture and to look to local markets.
2 And the number one reason that we see is the issue of
3 debt. To get into conventional agriculture, there -- and
4 to have it be profitable in the short term, there's an
5 enormous amount of land that's necessary. And beginning
6 farmers need higher returns on a smaller amount of land.

7 And also there -- to get into conventional
8 agriculture, there's an enormous amount of machinery
9 that's needed. And I hear beginning farmer educators say
10 quite often, don't invest in anything that rusts or
11 depreciates. You need to not start your farming
12 operation a half a million dollars in debt.

13 So, truly, I think beginning farmers are not
14 getting into conventional agriculture more because it --
15 they see it as more risky for them. And, so, I think if
16 we really want to see successes in this program --
17 especially in the first few years -- I think that the
18 stronger proposals are going to be coming from farmers
19 interested in local markets and organics.

20 DR. HIPPI: Anything else?

21 TRACI BRUCKNER: I wanted to add on to that a
22 little bit. At the Center for Rural Affairs, we serve

1 all farmers and ranchers. We have several conventional
2 farmers and ranchers that we work with, and we have
3 several sustainable agricultural based farmers and
4 ranchers, as well as organic farmers and ranchers.

5 The reason we emphasize trying to help farmers
6 get into markets where they can control their profit end
7 of the spectrum, is because it provides greater
8 opportunity for them to control those profits. And
9 speaking from my experience as being a farmer, when my
10 husband and I farmed, we were conventional farmers. We
11 did hogs farrow to finish. We did cattle. We did corn,
12 soybeans, alfalfa. So, we had a diversity of cropping
13 systems. But we were also very subject to what people
14 were going to pay us for those crops. We went through a
15 \$1.70 something corn. We went through eight cent hogs.
16 And that pretty much broke us.

17 So, if I was going to start in farming today,
18 I would want to start into a farming system that's going
19 to allow me to be more profitable and control the end
20 product, and control what's going to happen to that end
21 product.

22 And, so, I think, too, in thinking about that

1 for states that have highly rural populations, such as
2 Nebraska -- Western Nebraska, for example. Direct
3 marketing doesn't quite work as well in Western Nebraska
4 where you don't have the population base. So, we need to
5 find ways, that if a beginning farmers wants to get into
6 a high-value niche market that's a direct marketing
7 system, or some type of system like that, we've got to
8 find creative ways to allow them to tap into those
9 markets where they can maybe, you know, tap into where
10 the population base is. There's got to be a way to get
11 those products out to those population basis, because
12 they aren't going to have the population center in
13 Western Nebraska, for example, to purchase those
14 products.

15 So, there's unique challenges for highly rural
16 populations in that regard. But, like I said earlier, I
17 come at this not only from the policy side of it, but
18 from my direct experience. And grain prices and things
19 have been good now, but that's not going to hold for the
20 future. There's -- they're very fluctuating. And we
21 need to help them establish systems that allow them to be
22 profitable in the end.

1 DR. HIPPI: I think we have time for one more
2 or we are going to be forced to vacate this room. Anyone
3 else? Yeah.

4 ADAM WARTHESEN: I just thought I'd say thank
5 you to CSREES for doing this. We appreciate it.

6 DR. HIPPI: No applause is necessary. We --
7 this is -- to me this is one of the more enjoyable things
8 that I get to do, is to have stakeholder input, and to
9 hear from you, and to hear the challenges that beginning
10 farmers and ranchers are facing, and what we can do at
11 this end to help you create a vibrant and exciting
12 program. That's very exciting to me, so, thank you. And
13 thank you for coming. And thank you for taking the time
14 to be here to help us.

15 And I want to do a special recognition for
16 Patricia McAleery, you have to stand up, and Marietta
17 Purnell. They made sure that we had everything we needed
18 here in the room, even though there's probably coffee
19 left over there, you're welcome to take some home with
20 you. But we couldn't do anything without them. And we
21 very much appreciate both of you.

22 Suresh and I very excited about this program,

1 as you can obviously tell, we were pretty pumped up. So,
2 we're very tickled that you're here. We're very
3 accessible. And I cannot tell you how many times I go
4 talk to people and realize that there -- they have this
5 fear factor and they don't want to call a national
6 program leader. Please don't do that. Please pick up
7 the phone and call us. We are both extremely
8 accessible. We love e-mail. We hate Blackberries, but
9 we love e-mail, so -- Suresh.

10 DR. SURESHWARAN: Yeah, a couple of points. I
11 don't think I need to there. Before we close, I would
12 like to introduce a few other people, a few other
13 national program leaders who are working with us in
14 developing this program: Elizabeth Tuckermanty, Dennis
15 Ebodeghee, Dione Toombs, Diana Jerkins, and there are a
16 few others who are not here. I would like to thank all
17 of them for their contribution. I would like to
18 recognize Debbie and Frank who are our supervisors.
19 There were several comments made today which are also
20 relevant to many of our other programs, such as MRI and
21 HBIR. I'm involved with several of those programs. We
22 would like to see more applications from universities,

1 private businesses, and community-based organizations to
2 those programs. You received a handout this morning
3 about those programs, and I hope you will consider
4 submitting applications to those programs.

5 Again, like what Jamie said, thank you very
6 much for your support. We -- I have taken, I think,
7 pages and pages of notes. We are going to get the
8 transcript within five days. We will be waiting for your
9 written comments. We look forward to your support and we
10 look forward to working with you. Thank you.

11 DR. HIPPI: November 14th.

12 DR. SURESHWARAN: November 14th is the
13 deadline.

14 KENT SCHECKE: Will the transcript be posted?

15 DR. SURESHWARAN: Yes, but it may not be
16 posted immediately, but it will.

17 DR. HIPPI: Any other questions?

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Will you notify us when
19 it is by the e-mail we signed in with?

20 DR. SURESHWARAN: Yes. We are maintaining a
21 stakeholder list, and we will add all those who participated
22 in that list and we will --

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can I ask anyone who didn't
2 sign a release form to also do so today.

3 DR. SURESHWARAN: Debbie, yes --

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- thank everybody
5 for your time and please do follow up with many of
6 your comments in writing, you can be a little more
7 thorough that way. We value everything you had to
8 say today and we are also very pleased (inaudible).

9 DR. SURESHWARAN: Thank you, very much.

10 DR. HIPPE: Thank you.

11 (Whereupon the meeting was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIBER

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I, Alicia Bodle, do hereby certify that this transcript was prepared from audio to the best of my ability.

I am neither counsel nor party to this action nor am I interested in the outcome of this action.

Alicia Bodle