

MASTER LIST OF POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR FARMER INTERVIEWS:  
Choose a subset of 15-20 of these questions and have them ready in case the conversation hits a slow spot.

**Personal History**

- When did you start farming? Did you grow up on a farm?
- What brought you into farming (i.e. inheritance)?
- Are there any differences between your farm now and your farm when you were a kid?
- What chores did you have growing up on the farm?
- What was the biggest change you encountered during your years farming?
- What would you say have been the biggest changes you've implemented on your own farm since you've been farming here? Do they correspond with what you think the biggest changes have been in the industry during that time?
- What changes have you seen in the business aspect of farming in your lifetime?
- Has it been viewed as more of a business for you, or a lifestyle choice? Some combination of the both?
- What roles did the members of your family play in farming? Did everyone work on the farm or did people have off farm employment?
- How has labor on the farm changed from when you started until now? What machines have had the biggest impact?
- How have advances in technology such as, machinery, genetics, or chemicals, affected your farm or competition with your farm?
- As the divide between large and small farms has grown, how has your operation adjusted?
- Have you found that it's harder now than before to maintain this livelihood?
- Have you observed changes in the number, size and type of farms that are found your immediate locale? What is your attitude toward any trends you may have noticed?
- Have you ever considered getting out of agriculture for a more lucrative career? If so, what type of work did you think you might want to do?
- How do you see your role in the community?

### **Basic Farming Questions**

- What did you grow on the farm when you first started?
- Are you a first generation farm owner or has your family been in farming in the past?
- What is the hardest part of farming for you?
- What is the most satisfying part of farming for you?
- What time does your day start and end?
- How many acres is this farm?
- What crops do you grow? What's your main crop and why that particular one?
- What has been your most consistent crop in terms of making a good profit?
- How do you deal with weeds? With insect pests?
- Is farming your only source of income?
- Can you think of any tools that contemporary farmers must employ in order to stay competitive? How do they differ from those that you used in your earliest days as a farmer?
- What do you think was the most useful advance in farming?

### **Government's Role in Farming**

- How have farm subsidies affected you?
- Do you think our agricultural system benefits from subsidies or are they harmful?
- What do you think the government should do to change the farming industry?
- What do you think would happen to your farm and family if the government stopped subsidies?
- Have you seen a change in government involvement with agriculture in the US?

## **The Environment**

- What would you say to people who believe many conventional farming practices have a negative impact on the environment?
- Have you taken any steps to make your farm more environmentally friendly?
- Have you seen a change in your land since you first started farming?
- What do you think of sustainable agriculture? Are you under any pressure from consumers to move toward that practice?
- How do you feel about the local/organic food movement?
- What kind of conservation methods have you used, if any?
- *Specific questions about soil fertility, fertilizer use, pesticide use, etc.*

### **The Future of Farming in the US**

- Do you think Americans are aware or care about modern farming?
- What changes do you predict farming in the U.S. will see over the next 25 years?
- Do you know anyone (neighbors, family, friends) who's given up farming? Why exactly did they do it?
- What advice could you give to any young greenhorns interested in getting into farming?

### **Controversial Topics in Agriculture**

- When (what years) did you start to notice the most significant changes in American Agriculture occurring?
- What does the term industrial agriculture mean to you?
- As a farmer, do you feel as though you exercise independent control over your farm? In other words, do you feel that decisions regarding the operation of your farm are largely left to you? Are there any forces or circumstances that compromise your independence?
- In terms of taste, visual appeal, etc, would you say that the overall quality of food produced in the U.S. has increased, decreased, or remained the same?
- Do you find modern food production factories and harvesting machines fascinating or disturbing?
- Do you think GMOs could bring about the next “Green Revolution”?
  - ***NOTE: I would guess that very few of these farmers have heard of the term “Green Revolution.” A more fruitful question might be something along the lines of “What do you think of GMO crops?”***