Interviewing Do’s and Dont’s

• Get permission to record and archive the interview at the very beginning!

• Preparation is critical
  – Have questions prepared beforehand.
  – BUT...

• Make your questioning “conversational”
  – Do not read questions as if from a script
  – When an interesting topic comes up, run with it – be prepared to ask questions out of order

• Be careful about “team effort” – don’t interrupt, overpower one another, etc.

• Don’t talk too much. The art of interviewing is all about the art of listening, of getting the subject to speak as much as possible.

• Start off with a question about the farmer’s own life – how did they get into farming, have they farmed their whole life, etc.
Questions I really loved

• What is the hardest part of farming for you?
• What is the most satisfying part of farming for you?
• What do you think are the biggest misconceptions about farming or farmers held by those distant from the occupation?
• What time does your day start and end?
• What would you say to people who believe many conventional farming practices have a negative impact on the environment?
Possibly tricky questions I: Wording

• Are you worried about the climate changes happening, as well as the alarming rate of soil loss affecting farms and crop production?
• Have you noticed any major or minor changes in your community from your childhood to now? If yes, what do you think caused these?
• What are your major inputs?
• Have you looked into organic?
Possibly tricky questions II: ideas

• Do you predict there will soon only be large conventional farms? Is there any way that small-scale farms could make a comeback?
• Do you think the food system we have now is working/will continue to work?
• How involved is the government in your farm?
• Do you consider any environmental factors while operating your farm?
• What is your opinion on industrialized farming?
How to get more from your questions

- “Can you elaborate on that?”
- “Can you go into a little more detail?”
- “Can you give me an example?”
- “That’s really interesting, it reminds me of….”
Data to collect (TENTATIVE)

- Name(s) of interviewee(s)
- Name(s) of interviewer(s)
- Name of professor and class (Dr. Matthew Mariola, agroecology?)
- Date of interview
- Suggested keywords/index terms
  - How are you, students, faculty, community likely to want to search
- Age of farmer/farm
- # generation of farmer (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.)
- # of people in family
- # of years farming
- Size of farm (acreage, cows, etc)
- Type of production (dairy, type of crop(s) etc.)