Engaging with Consumers: How College of Agriculture Graduates Engage with Consumers After Graduation

Thesis

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By

Stephanie Marie Leis, B.A.
Graduate Program in Agricultural and Extension Education

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Master’s Examination Committee:
Dr. Emily Buck, Advisor
Dr. Annie Specht
Abstract

Americans are more removed from agriculture than they have ever been in the nation’s history. While fewer people farm or live on farms today since more people have been moving to urban communities, the researcher wanted to interview College of Agriculture graduates to see if they were talking about their experiences growing up on a farm with the consumers they interact with every day. This qualitative study was conducted by reaching out to undergraduate alumni from The Ohio State University’s College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES). One hundred alumni were emailed, and 12 responded and participated in telephone interviews. The self presentation theory, cognitive dissonance theory, and schema theory guided this study. Findings included that five participants grew up on family farms, with three of the five saying they had considered moving back to their rural community to farm. One participant who grew up on a farm returned to his community to farm. The participants said the main reasons why college students do not move back to a rural community after graduating were because of a lack of jobs and the family farm may not be large enough to support more families.

Ten of the alumni also said that they talked about agriculture with consumers often. Major themes that were seen when study participants were asked what types of
conversations typically came up with consumers included food, organic foods, and food safety. Seven of the 12 participants (58.33%) said that they felt qualified to answer questions from consumers about agriculture. Eleven of the 12 participants said yes, it was important to talk to consumers about agriculture. After being asked what topics the participants believed farmers should be informing consumers about more frequently, the major themes from participants were that consumers should be informed about genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, and general information about agriculture. When the participants were asked what they believed were the biggest obstacles facing farmers trying to engage with consumers who are most likely not connected to agriculture, the major themes that emerged were a lack of education or ignorance, distance and lack of exposure to agriculture, and perception and culture.

One finding from this study was that the people who left their agricultural backgrounds had very positive experiences. They didn't move away because they did not enjoy being involved in agriculture, but either a lack of job opportunities in the area, not enough room for them to join their family’s current operation, or simply a desire to excel at something different led them away from agriculture. Recommendations for future studies include using the results from this study to make a survey and engage a larger audience to gain more data. Other recommendations include encouraging farmers to interact with consumers more frequently and consider doing agricultural entertainment, also known as agritainment or agritourism, to introduce consumers to what they do to raise livestock and grow food.
Dedication

To my maternal grandmother, Lois “Mildred” Fisher, for breaking the barriers of her time by earning her bachelor’s and master’s degrees from The Ohio State University, all while prioritizing her marriage and raising five children. Grandma, thank you for your unconditional love. I miss you every day. I’m thrilled to be earning my master’s degree from the same university as you.

and

To my paternal grandfather, John Lewis Leis, of Ansonia, Ohio. You passed your love of agriculture and the fertile land of Darke County, Ohio, down to my dad, Steve, who passed it down to me. I’m very thankful that I received your distinctly German traits of stubbornness and the outgoing ability to talk to anyone I encounter. As the only grandpa I ever knew, I have missed you more than I can say.
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- My aunt, Mary Ann Fisher, for her support while I’ve been living in Columbus, pushing me when I felt unmotivated, and for Chick-Fil-A on Friday nights. This thesis would not have been completed without her encouragement.

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- “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”
  – Ephesians 3:20-21
Vita

May 2006 ................................................. Ansonia High School

May 2009 .................................................. B.A. Media Communication,

Taylor University

June 2009-May 2010 .............................. University Relations/Advancement,

Taylor University

July 2010-January 2012 ............................ Staff Writer/Copy Editor

The Daily Advocate Newspaper

January 2012-present .............................. Public Information Officer

Ohio Department of Natural Resources

2012-2015 ............................................... Graduate Student

The Ohio State University

Fields of Study

Major Field: Agricultural and Extension Education

Area of Emphasis: Agricultural Communication
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Every person has a “vested interest” in agriculture because every person needs to eat (Birkenholz, 1990). For hundreds of years, almost every person in the United States had direct ties to production agriculture—if they did not farm themselves, they at least had a close relative or acquaintance involved in farming. The shifting trend of Americans moving from rural communities to urban locations and the consequences from it will be discussed in this study.

Background

The United States is the 62nd most-rural country in the world (Gilbert, Karahalios, & Sandvig, 2010), and agriculture is critical to feeding the residents of the nation. In Ohio, food and agriculture is the state’s number one industry, contributing $93 billion to the state’s economy (Ohio Proud, 2008). There are 75,462 farms in Ohio, placing the state as seventh in the nation for the number of farms (Ohio Department of Agriculture, 2013; United States Department of Agriculture, 2012). While the number of farms in the United States has decreased by 4.3%, farms in Ohio have only decreased by half a percent, and Ohio has almost 14 million acres of farmland (Ohio Department of Agriculture, 2013). “Furthermore, in a time when farm acres are disappearing, with the
nation losing about 7.5 million acres of farmland since the 2007 census, the numbers of acres in agricultural production in Ohio have remained steady and actually increased slightly” (Ohio Department of Agriculture, 2013, p. 11). Ohio has more than 1,000 food processing companies, and Ohio farmers produce more than 200 commercial crops across the state’s fertile farmland (Ohio Proud, 2008).

According to Sachs (1983), the United States population in 1840 was 89% rural. People continued to move from farms into urban communities during the 19th century, meaning that only 60% of the population was rural by 1900 (Sachs, 1983). Almost a century ago, approximately 50% of the nation’s population lived in rural communities, with about 30% of the workforce actively engaged in farming (Bloome, 1992). Gradually, that trend began shifting. Not long ago, most of the people in the world farmed, and yet today in the United States, according to the EPA’s Ag Center (2012), less than 1% of people in the United States claim farming as their occupation, and as of 2007, 45% of farmers said farming was their principal occupation, meaning some of them worked at other off-farm jobs. Today, less than 2% of the people in the United States live on farms (EPA’s Ag Center, 2012). According to Bell, Jarnagin, Peter, and Bauer (2004), there are three times more construction workers than farmers in the country.

Jobs and Rural Communities

What contributed to this migration? The move most likely stemmed from “the huge increase in the productivity of American agriculture” (Bloome, 1992, p. 1) and a lack of jobs in rural communities. A study by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in 2002
focused on respondents’ views on rural America and agriculture. The study interviewed 242 urban, suburban, and rural Americans in various regions of the United States. Researchers found that “many respondents identify low agricultural profitability and job insecurity as the most important problem facing rural America …” (p. 2). Of the respondents, 30% identified “lack of money (19 percent) and the absence of opportunities (11 percent) as the biggest problems facing rural America” (Kellogg, 2002, p. 11).

Some of the respondents also expressed concern about values lost when young people leave the farm for bigger cities. Bell et al. (2004) found that each year more people leave rural communities to find “their fortunes where the real fortunes seem always to be made: in cities” (p. 241). When young adults consider leaving the farm or their rural communities for better-paying jobs, it may be harder to entice them to return. Carr and Kefalas (2009) wrote “The decisions that young people on the edge of adulthood make about whether to stay or leave home have profound implications for the future of rural America” (p. 3).

Although people are leaving rural communities for better-paying jobs in urban communities, there are still some job opportunities available for young adults in rural America. Most job growth seen in rural America during the past few decades has been in service and retail industries (United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, 2012). According to Isserman (2001), manufacturing jobs are available. “Together, rural America and formerly rural America added more than 2 million manufacturing jobs between 1969 and 1997, while 1950 urban America lost more
than 3 million jobs. Rural and formerly urban American now have 84 percent as many manufacturing jobs as urban America, up from 48 percent in less than three decades” (Isserman, 2001, p. 46). Those types of jobs do not appeal to all youth.

This exodus from rural communities not only affects farming families, but it also affects local communities and economies. In addition to young adults, women also often leave the farming operation for employment elsewhere (Sachs, 1983). According to the Iowa Farm and Rural Life Poll’s 2008 Summary Report, 65% of the Farm Poll participants agreed a “lack of employment opportunities in their communities was an important factor in people’s decisions to move elsewhere” (Arbuckle, Korsching, Lasley, & Kast, p. 5). Another aspect of life in rural communities in America is that certain economic disadvantages include lower population density and a small labor force (Isserman, 2001). “Rural America also does not offer recent college graduates large numbers of their peers to join in work and play” (Isserman, 2001, p. 45), meaning that if people do leave their rural hometown to go to college, and then go back to their local community, it can be a lonely transition since many of their classmates may not return.

*Changing Landscape for Jobs in Rural America*

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (2014), Ohio’s exports of farm and ranch products contributed $4.1 billion to the state’s economy in 2012. Additionally, rural manufacturing supports a total of 197,145 jobs in Ohio (United States Department of Agriculture, 2014). To help increase manufacturing in rural areas, the United States Department of Agriculture has “invested $51.7 million to help rural
manufacturers in Ohio increase production and capacity” (United States Department of Agriculture, 2014). However, manufacturing in rural America has been negatively affected over the past 20 years with more than 1.5 million rural workers losing their jobs between 1997-2003 (Glasmeier & Salant, 2006). One difference between losing jobs for people who live in urban and rural communities is that people working at jobs in rural locations have a harder time adjusting to the job loss since the local economy usually depends on one main industry, as opposed to a myriad of industries that are available in urban communities.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (2015), a total of 16.9 million full- and part-time jobs were related to agriculture in 2013, which equaled approximately 9.2% of total employment in the United States, with on-farm employment counting for more than 2.6 million of those jobs. Employment in related industries amount to another 14.2 million jobs in rural America, with food services and drinking places accounting for 11.1 million jobs (United States Department of Agriculture, 2015).

Another issue is that some people did not leave rural areas—instead, urban areas gradually came to them (Isserman, 2001) through a phenomenon commonly referred to as urban sprawl, or overdevelopment (Kellogg, 2002). Approximately 71 million people, one-fourth of the U.S. population, “live in what was rural America in 1950 but is considered urban America today” (Isserman, 2001, p. 41).
Farmers raise livestock and grow crops to meet the demand of the global population, which is projected to grow to nine billion people by 2050 (Doerfert, 2011). As the number of people needing to eat in the world continues to grow, the number of farms in the United States has declined. According to the United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (2014), the total number of farms in America peaked in 1935 with 6.8 million farms, but that number dropped until it leveled out in the beginning of the 1970s. There are approximately 2.1 million farms in the nation (United States Department of Agriculture, 2014). Today, almost 60 million people in the United States live in rural areas (United States Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture, 2014).

Although many people are choosing to live and raise their families in urban areas, agriculture is still a very viable and important part of our society. According to the American Farm Bureau Federation (2014), “about 97 percent of U.S. farms are operated by families—individuals, family partnerships or family corporations” (2014, p. 1). Additionally, American Farm Bureau Federation (2014) found that more than 21 million Americans (15% of the total workforce in the United States) “produce, process and sell the nation’s food and fiber” (p. 1). Not only have farmers become more efficient at feeding more people, they have also greatly contributed to improving the economy and keeping grocery bills low for Americans. According to the United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (2015), “agriculture and agriculture-related
industries contributed $789 billion to the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) in 2013, a 4.7-percent share” (p. 1). Additionally, the “output of America’s farms contributed $166.9 billion of this sum—about 1 percent of GDP” (United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, 2015, p. 1). American consumers spent 15% of their household budgets on food back in 1984, and now they spend 13% of their budget on food, according to the United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (2015). The amount Americans spend on food is traditionally lower than many other countries.

*Transition to Living in Urban Areas*

With the continued trend of people moving from rural areas to urban communities, Birkenholz (1990) noted, “With each succeeding generation, the average citizen will be one step further removed from production agriculture” (p. 12). Most of today’s elementary school children are at least two generations away from direct knowledge of agriculture (American Farm Bureau Federation, 2002). With more people leaving rural America in droves, people who no longer have a connection to the farms of their grandparents or great-grandparents are now more interested in what kind of food they eat and how it is being raised. As Bell et al. (2004) stated, “For while it is true, as long as we yet eat and live, that agriculture is not over, nor even close to it, it is also true that most of us no longer feel a part of its conversation” (p. 244). According to Bloome (1992), “Society has become much more involved in determining how agriculture will be practiced” (p. 2), which can leave conventional farmers feeling frustrated that their
farming practices may be misunderstood by people who are no longer connected to agriculture.

People in urban communities are beginning to expect different options from agriculture, with an emphasis on local foods (Bell et al., 2004) and organic foods (Padel, 2001), and options are important for consumers. According to Ohio Proud (2008), the 2007 consumer study found that 93% of the individuals who were surveyed preferred buying Ohio products, as opposed to purchasing national brands. Additionally, consumers would pay “up to 50 cents more for items made in Ohio” (p. 1), which shows that people are willing to pay a little more to purchase products made in-state as opposed to products made out of state.

A study conducted by Frick, Birkenholz, and Machtmes (1995) focused on the knowledge and perception of urban and rural adults in a Midwestern state about natural resources, agriculture, and food. Frick et al. (1995) found that a little more than 13% of the people who responded lived on farms, while almost two-thirds of the respondents had relatives either living or working on a farm. Slightly more than half of the respondents said their relatives worked for an agricultural business. The individuals who responded that lived on farms were “more knowledgeable about agriculture than their rural non-farm neighbors, who were more knowledgeable than their urban counterparts” (Frick et al., 1995, p. 51). Additionally, they found that respondents who had received higher levels of education were more knowledgeable about agriculture compared to other people who were surveyed that had less education.
Frick et al. (1995) further explained that it made sense for their respondents from smaller communities to know more about agriculture compared to people from urban areas because the people from smaller towns and cities most likely had more interaction with farmers and agribusinesses than those in bustling urban communities. Frick et al. found that “educational programs should be provided in larger population centers to meet the educational needs of those residents regarding agriculture, food, and natural resources” (p. 52). However, Frick et al. also indicated that while some of the respondent groups did not know much about agriculture, at that time, their views of the industry were “somewhat positive” (p. 52). Frick et al. suggested that more positive views of agriculture would result if the “agricultural literary knowledge level of United States citizens were to be enhanced” (p. 52). Bridging the gap of knowledge between urban and rural communities is important so that both groups can learn from one another.

Conflict Expectations

As people are now typically two to three generations removed from the farm and not as connected to agriculture, issues arise with differences between what some farmers would consider realistic expectations. A recent example occurred when California voters passed Proposition 2, which states that every egg-laying hen must be able to have a total of 116 square inches in a cage, allowing the hen to spread her wings (Hearden, 2015). These new chicken cage requirements led to high increases in prices for eggs at the grocery store with the potential of paying almost 50% more for a dozen eggs, which meant the prices went up to approximately $3 per carton (Pierson, 2014). “The law,
approved by voters in Proposition 2 in 2008, has caused many growers to simply reduce the number of birds they house in existing facilities” (Hearden, 2015). With fewer hens having eggs, demand increased. Randy Pesciotta, vice president of the egg division for the commodity reporting service Urner Barry, said that was bound to happen. “That’s the way it works no matter what you’re selling,” he said. “That’s kind of what they’re up against right now. It’s a proposition that was voted on within the California community, so they kind of brought it upon themselves” (Hearden, 2015). This change does not just affect California egg farmers, but it affects all egg farmers whose eggs go to California. Negative consequences can occur for consumers and the agricultural industry when a bill is voted on by consumers who are not used to dealing with livestock on a farm, and food prices may increase as a result of the outcome of the vote.

In another recent example, major restaurant chain Chipotle Mexican Grill announced in April 2015 that they were no longer using any GMO products in their food. Chipotle defines a GMO as something that is “created by inserting genes from one species (typically bacteria or a virus) into the DNA of another” (“Food with Integrity, G-M-Over It,” 2015). Although Chipotle does state on their website that some studies have shown that GMOs are safe, they wrote that more independent studies are needed since “we don’t believe the scientific community has reached a consensus on the long-term implications of widespread GMO cultivation and consumption” (“Food with Integrity, G-M-Over It,” 2015).

Additionally, according to the United States Department of Agriculture Economic
Research Service (2012), the United States is the world’s largest producer of beef, raising primarily “high quality, grain-fed beef for domestic and export use” (p. 1). The type of beef available in America has also been an issue for Chipotle Mexican Grill. American beef farmers were surprised when Chipotle Mexican Grill founder, chairman, and co-CEO Steve Ells said Chipotle had encountered trouble securing “Responsibly Raised meat” and wrote that “Rather than serve conventionally raised steak, we recently began sourcing some steak from ranches in Southern Australia, which is among the best places in the world for raising beef cattle entirely on grass” (Ells, 2014, p. 1).

Amanda Radke of BEEF Daily wrote that her problem with Ells’ article was that he essentially said if Americans eat conventionally raised beef, they are being “irresponsible” (Radke, 2014). She added [Ells] “insinuates that traditional beef is full of hormones and antibiotics, and sourcing beef that has been raised with ‘integrity’ is incredibly difficult in the U.S., which couldn’t be further from the truth” (Radke, 2014, p. 1). The Texas Department of Agriculture also tweeted out “@ChipotleTweets plans to import beef from Australia. 8,000 miles doesn’t seem ‘local’ to us. #LetsTalkBeef” (“Texas Official Irked After Chipotle Goes Aussie,” 2014). These are just some examples of the struggles and differing expectations between farmers, ranchers, and producers with consumers and restaurant owners as society seeks different food options, and as farmers struggle to share why they farm to consumers who believe they are “irresponsible producers” for raising grain-fed beef and growing GMO crops such as field corn.

Because people are becoming so disconnected from agriculture and the nation’s
farmers, the local foods movement is an option for people to get back in touch with agriculture and where their food comes from. Inwood, Sharp, Moore, and Stinner (2009) interviewed Ohio chefs in restaurants that reported using local foods frequently and learned that some of the chefs had their staff visit the farms where the food was raised. Inwood et al. (2009) wrote that these employee farm field trips “intended to help employees develop an enhanced understanding of the food they handled and to cultivate a personal relationship with the farmer” (p. 186). This is an opportunity for restaurant staff to learn about agriculture, allowing them to share that knowledge with the customers they serve.

While consumers are more concerned with products being organic and less pesticides being used on crops, farmers are also trying to figure out how to farm more efficiently and cost-effectively. Farm Media Journal surveyed more than 700 farmers in 2015 to find out how they plan to lower or economize their input costs for 2015. Some of the responses including 30.9% of respondents saying they were planning on buying less fertilizer; 20.7% said they were looking to purchase smaller amounts of pesticides, fungicides, and insecticides; and 21.4% said they were hoping to reduce their energy consumption (Potter, 2015). These are some example of ways that farmers are working to feed consumers and be good stewards of the land.

According to Birkenholz (1990), “agricultural educators have an obligation to increase the level of understanding about the importance of the agricultural industry to our way of life” (p. 13). That obligation extends specifically to people who were raised
on farms and moved to urban areas, providing them the opportunity to talk to people about agriculture because “lacking trustworthy information, humans tend to assume the worst” (Center & Jackson, p. 322). Birkenholz (1990) highlighted the need for agricultural instruction in the secondary levels to inform students about agriculture. Birkenholz acknowledged that schools that do not offer secondary agricultural programs are the ones whose students would most “likely benefit from information about agriculture, food, and food production” (p. 12). Doerfert (2011) also emphasized the importance of educating the public about agriculture.

The non-agriculture population has little to no understanding of the complexities involved with sustaining a viable agriculture system. The potential negative impacts of an uninformed population on the United States and global agriculture and food systems are great. An informed citizenry, including policy decisions at all levels, will create win-win solutions that ensure the long-term sustainability of agriculture, natural resources, and quality of life in communities across the world. (p. 8)

Farming and agriculture remain important to the United States because food is needed to feed the nation, and for many farmers, agriculture is as much a part of their way of life as it is their career. As Bell et al. (2004) wrote

Farmers and others associated with rural life … often described farming itself almost as a kind of ethnicity – as something that one is born into, that one should
marry within, that one hopes one’s children will perpetuate. In these ways farming becomes more than an occupation, and more than a culture associated with an occupation: It becomes part of farmers’ bodies, the history of their bodies, and the future of their bodies. (p. 117)

While farming and agriculture will continue to change and evolve, it is also important to use this study as a opportunity to discover how college graduates who have left the farm for an urban community are talking about agriculture with their fellow consumers.

Significance and Problem Statement

More and more people are leaving rural America, and the problem is that there is a growing disconnect between consumers and farmers, especially related to how food is grown. However, with so many alumni from The Ohio State University’s College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES) located around the nation and around the world, the researcher wanted to focus on interviewing some of these alumni who earned their bachelor’s degrees from the college to find out how they talk about agriculture with the consumers around them.

According to Doerfert (2011), “The future of American agriculture rests in the hands of 98 percent of the United States population who do not reside on a farm and may have little to no understanding of agriculture” (p. 11). Food entrepreneur Rob Smart wrote that consumer advocates are fighting with farmers because “the knowledge gap between them has grown so expansive that misunderstandings rule the day,” adding that
consumer advocates and farmers could accomplish so much more if they worked together (The Huffington Post, 2009, p. 1). With alumni working in urban communities, it could be a great opportunity for them to share their experiences in agriculture with the consumers and friends they encounter on a daily basis.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to see if people leaving rural communities for urban areas communicate with the consumers around them about agriculture. If alumni are talking about agriculture, it would be beneficial to know what is being said: whether or not they speak positively, negatively, or indifferently about agriculture and food to the consumers they interact with on a daily basis. It is also important to ascertain why the participants left the farm and what kept them from returning to the farm.

“Most Americans, whether young or old, have limited knowledge about agriculture and food production” (Frick et al., 1995, p. 44). The growing disconnect between people living in rural and urban communities means that improving communication between the two groups is crucial. Frequent conversations on organic versus conventional, cages versus cage-free, and antibiotic-free have become greater issues to consumers throughout the past decade. This study will examine whether or not Ohio State graduates talk about agriculture and food with the consumers they interact with on a daily basis, and if so, what they are saying.

People who have grown up on a farm or surrounded by agriculture could be
excellent resources to share the story of agriculture to those they interact with daily in their workplaces and neighborhoods. This study will describe their messages about agriculture, and it could help communicators better understand the messages about agriculture that are being shared by people who have left the farm.

Research Objectives

The research objectives for this study are below:

1. To describe the reasoning behind individuals’ decision on whether or not they decided to return to the farm after college.
2. To examine the messages that individuals share with consumers they interact with in urban and suburban areas.
3. To describe what individuals with agricultural backgrounds believe are the biggest obstacles farmers face as they try to engage with consumers.

Summary

In conclusion, Ohioans, Americans, and the rest of the world will continue to need farmers to grow the limitless varieties of food that they eat for three meals every day. Today, more people live in urban communities compared to people living in rural communities. With this change in populations, and a growing disconnect between the urban and rural communities, it will be important to learn how people with rural backgrounds can and do communicate with people who are no longer directly connected to the farm. The goal of this study is to gather information about whether or not Ohio
State CFAES alumni talk about agriculture with the consumers around them.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Since food and agriculture is the largest industry in the state of Ohio, the researcher developed this qualitative study to learn what The Ohio State University’s College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Science (CFAES) undergraduate alumni were saying to consumers about agriculture following graduation. Consumers are one of agriculture’s essential stakeholders (Thompson, 2012), and this study focused on whether people leaving rural communities for urban communities are talking to consumers around them about agriculture. It would be beneficial for agriculturalists to know what is being said: whether or not people speak positively, negatively, or indifferently about agriculture and food to the consumers they interact with on a daily basis.

*Research Objectives*

1. To examine the reasoning behind individuals’ decision on whether or not they decided to return to the farm after college.

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biggest obstacles farmers face as they try to engage with consumers.

This chapter reviews the guiding theories of self-presentation theory, schema, and cognitive dissonance, as well as other related research.

**Self Presentation Theory**

According to Goffman (1973), when individuals meet new people, they try to glean information from those new people so they will know how to act. “Information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him. Informed in these ways, the others will know how best to act in order to call forth a desired response from him” (Goffman, 1973, p. 1). Goffman (1973) wrote about theories of social performance and identity, saying that self presentation occurs when people want to guide how others view them. The self presentation theory describes people as wanting to present the best image of themselves, especially when engaging with people they have not met before.

According to Goffman (1973), people begin judging new individuals they meet by looking at their appearance and behavior. When people meet other new individuals, they start categorizing them to compare them to people they have met who are similar to the new individuals, and they may even start putting them in certain stereotypical boxes after meeting them. How expressive an individual is makes a difference to the people they just met, depending on the “expression that he gives, and the expression that he gives off” (Goffman, 1973, p. 2). Regarding the expression that a person gives means traditional communication, using things like verbal symbols to speak with others. The expression
that is *given off* happens when a person uses a wide variety of actions so the new people he or she meets will believe these actions are typical of him or her. “The individual does of course intentionally convey misinformation by means of both of these types of communication, the first involving deceit, the second feigning” (Goffman, 1973, p. 2). It would be in the person’s best interests to “control the conduct of the others, especially their responsive treatment of him” (Goffman, 1973, p. 3) so that the meeting will go well, whether or not he or she wants to insult, befriend, antagonize, or honor the people he or she is meeting for the first time.

According to Goffman (1973), some individuals have no idea that they are acting in a “thoroughly calculating manner, expressing himself in a given way solely in order to give the kind of impression to others that is likely to evoke from them a specific response he is concerned to obtain” (p. 6). Sometimes people express themselves the way they were taught through either their social status or how their group generally expressed themselves, instead of wanting approval from the new people they meet. If the other people respond as though a particular individual gave them a specific impression, it is possible that the individual has passed along how the situation really went. Specifically focusing on the people who are meeting this new person, Goffman (1973) wrote, “Knowing that the individual is likely to present himself in a light that is favorable to him, the others may divide what they witness into two parts; a part that is relatively easy for the individual to manipulate at will, being chiefly his verbal assertions, and a part in regard to which he seems to have little concern or control, being chiefly derived from the
expressions he gives off” (p. 7). People may know they are saying one thing, but their actions expose how they really feel (Goffman, 1973). Goffman gave the example of when a visitor from another country eats a woman’s cooking. While the man may say how much he is enjoying her food, the woman will watch to see how quickly and how eagerly he eats to see if his actions match his words to show how he was really feeling about the situation. Goffman (1973) added that since people are more likely to check what a person actually says with his or her body language and nonverbal traits, “one can expect that sometimes the individual will try to exploit this very possibility, guiding the impression he makes through behavior felt to be reliably informing” (p. 7-8). This is one way that people may try to control a situation when meeting others for the first time to try and ensure that they make good impressions.

Tyler (2012) defines self presentation as occurring when people “deliberately attempt to project a desired identity image to others” (p. 619), such as when a person dresses and speaks highly of himself or herself on a first date while striving to make the best possible first impression. Schlenker and Leary (1982) wrote about people’s social anxiety and subsequent avoidance behaviors and how these lead to two specific cognitive components, which are “the desire to make a particular impression in an interpersonal situation (e.g., to be seen as likeable, attractive, intelligent, or competent) and the belief that one is not capable of making this desired impression” (Maddux, Norton, & Leary, 1988, p. 180-181). The belief that individuals cannot make the best impression that they want to make can lead to internal anxiety.
Tyler (2012) also discussed goal pursuit and how people can do it nonconsciously, explaining that goal pursuit came out of mental processes that begin outside of conscious awareness. “Central to the idea of automatic goal pursuit is the assumption that goals are represented in mental structures (i.e., knowledge structures) that include the context, the goal, and actions that may aid goal pursuit, and they can therefore be primed automatically by relevant environmental stimuli, much in the same way that social attitudes, constructs, stereotypes, and schemas are” (Tyler, 2012, p. 619-620).

Further, Tyler’s (2012) study showed nonconscious self presentation, stating that people were not aware that their own self presentations were “being triggered automatically” (p. 624). There may be a connection between goal contagion and self presentation. Tyler (2012) speculated that if a person was encouraged to set a specific goal after seeing someone else pursue that goal, then it would be possible that a person may unconsciously participate in self presentation if he or she sees another person engaged in it.

Schau and Gilly (2003) focused on people using self presentation online with brands or products to give themselves a certain identity that they wished to encourage. “Consumers make their identities tangible, or self-present, by associating themselves with material objects and places” (Schau & Gilly, 2003, p. 385). When people make purchases, such as buying clothing, cars, or combines, it is a way for them to “self present” themselves to the world around them, whether they are consciously thinking
about it or not. Chen and Marcus (2012) wrote about how self-disclosure is defined as occurring when a person communicates about himself or herself to another person. By sharing information about themselves or products they have purchased to other people online, individuals communicate about the person they want people to believe they are. People prefer to highlight their positive attributes when they are trying to make a good impression (Schlenker & Pontari, 2000).

Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter have also opened up a whole new opportunity for people to self disclose to their Facebook friends or Twitter followers. “In essence, we may indeed be what we have self-presented, but we are also a great deal more” (Schau & Gilly, 2003, p. 387). Whenever people post information about themselves on social media such as Twitter or Facebook, they present themselves in ways that they want people to view them.

Today, more than ever, how people represent themselves, their families, and their jobs when they meet new people or use social media reflects back on who they are as individuals. According to Duncan and Broyles (2006), the population today has shifted more to the suburbs, causing people to be less knowledgeable about different aspects occurring in agriculture. Since the majority of consumers are not directly connected to the farm, it is important to learn how people who grew up on a farm talk about their experience in agriculture with consumers.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

This study was conducted to learn how people talk about agriculture with the
consumers they encounter on a daily basis and to ascertain how they dealt with the potential dissonance they felt when they talked about agriculture with consumers who are not from a farm background. Festinger (1957) describes dissonance as a state of being psychologically uncomfortable, with cognitive dissonance meaning that the discomfort will push the person to change and try to reduce the dissonance he or she feels. Festinger wrote that cognition is a knowledge, belief, or opinion about a person’s behavior, environment, or about oneself. “Cognitive dissonance can be seen as an antecedent condition which leads to activity oriented toward hunger reduction” (Festinger, 1957, p. 3). A second component of cognitive dissonance is a person’s attempt to refrain from situations or information that could increase the dissonance he or she feels. Cognitive dissonance can become uncomfortable as a role conflict in cases where people have differing expectations for roles in a situation. A person can try to “establish internal harmony, consistency, or congruity among his opinions, attitudes, knowledge, and values. Two cognitive elements are in a dissonant relation if, considering these two alone, the obverse of one element follows from the other” (Festinger, 1957, p. 260).

Glatz, Stattin, and Kerr (2012) describe Festinger’s cognitive dissonance theory as a clashing of two different cognitions. “Dissonance is an aversive state in which people experience discomfort, and to reduce this discomfort, people must change one of the cognitions” (Glatz, Stattin, & Kerr, 2012, p. 630). By lowering the dissonance of a particular situation, the individual would experience a certain reducing of their overall discomfort. For example, if a person experienced discomfort and did not change their
attitude or approach about this discomfort, then the person most likely remained uncomfortable.

Glatz, Stattin, and Kerr (2012) used cognitive dissonance theory to examine how parents reacted to their adolescent sons drinking alcohol. First, they established that most parents see underage drinking as a problem in today’s society. Youth and their parents filled out questionnaires for five years to show passage of time and to ascertain whether or not attitudes changed, as well as whether or not parents encountered their youth intoxicated. The authors proposed that parents who found their youths intoxicated would feel dissonance, which would engender a desire within them to lower the dissonance. However, Glatz, Stattin, and Kerr found that “parents who became more lenient toward youth drinking over time did not reduce their control of their youths more than parents who maintained their opposition to youth drinking” (p. 638). The authors did learn that parents who encountered their youths intoxicated demonstrated a “sharper decrease in stricter attitudes over time” (p. 638). The results of this study also showed that, following cognitive dissonance theory, parents who maintained their strict attitudes about their youths drinking alcohol experienced an increase in worry, while parents who grew less opposed to underage drinking after finding their youths intoxicated showed a small decrease in overall worry.

Cognitive dissonance can also occur when women combat against negative social stereotypes in the workplace, especially if they are in industry leadership roles or positions contradictory to a traditional ‘feminine’ role. Instead of leading in their own
style, they may subconsciously decide to communicate in a more masculine way to reduce the dissonance so they are able to be on more of a level playing field with men (von Hippel, Wiryakusuma, Bowden, & Shochet, 2011).

When people feel uncomfortable about what they hear being said about agriculture, they may feel pressured to change their perspectives so that their views are more similar to the views of the people around them. They may also share their own experiences with agriculture to combat the negative things that people say about it. For example, if a person grew up on a farm and had positive experiences with his or her family, cognitive dissonance can occur when that person has a college class where the other students talk negatively about agriculture or farmers. For the person, cognitive dissonance may be created because he or she feels uncomfortable. To reduce that discomfort, the person may either try to push aside or ignore the negative comments about agriculture coming from his or her peers; he or she may try to take different classes where the other students do not talk as negatively about agriculture; or he or she may speak up in that class, talking about his or her positive experiences in agriculture to offer a differing perspective. If the person decides to share what he or she experienced growing up, the individual may experience a lessening of the discomfort because he or she has refused to sit quietly in class as though he or she agrees with what is being said. If an individual talks about his or her own experiences and why he or she supports agriculture, it may provide some additional education or new information to the consumers with whom they interact.
That dissonance is not only felt by the college student—it can be felt by people who feel strongly about promoting agriculture’s message and then encounter other people with polar opposite views about agriculture. If a person moves to an urban area after graduating from college and growing up on a farm, it can cause dissonance for them when someone speaks negatively about farming or agriculture. To reduce the dissonance, the person may change his or her views to think more negatively about agriculture; the person may find new friends to spend time with who share their own view on agriculture; or the person may speak up and talk about his or her own experiences with agriculture growing up on a farm, whether or not they are positive or negative.

Schema Theory

The final theory guiding this study is the schema theory. Schema has been used for thousands of years, first by such philosophers as Aristotle and Plato (Marshall, 1995). However, McVee, Dunsmore, and Gavelek (2005) wrote how Kant is most likely as the first person who ever talked about schemas as “organizing structures” (p. 535). In Kant’s view, a person’s schema was “a lens that both shaped and was shaped by experience” (McVee, Dunsmore, & Gavelek, 2005, p. 535). Additionally, Campbell (1989) defined schemata as “a sort of bias inherent in the mind” (p. 90).

Schema theory has evolved since its inception, with additional views and perspectives added in the 1970s and 1980s after further work in cognitive science. The schema theory is one that is especially used by educators, in particular when they address reading comprehension and research (McVee, Dunsmore, & Gavelek, 2005). Rumelhart
and Ortony (1977) defined schemata as “data structures for representing the generic concepts stored in memory. They exist for generalized concepts underlying objects, situations, events, sequences of events, actions, and sequences of actions” (p. 101). Similarly, Brewer and Nakamura (1984) wrote that schemata are “higher-order cognitive structures that have been hypothesized to underlie many aspects of human knowledge and skill” (p. 120). Arbib, Conklin, and Hill (1987) wrote that a schema was both “a process and a representation” (p. 7). Brewer and Nakamura (1984) expounded, writing schemas are important because they help explain how former knowledge works with brand-new knowledge for things such as memory, language, thought, and perception. According to Hess and Trexler (2011), schemata represent the “mental patterns of interconnected information people hold about a topic,” adding that schemata can actually be built, destroyed, and built again to form new schemata (p.152). Rumelhart (1984) discussed many critical facets of schemas, including that they have variables, they can be embedded within each other, they are active processes, and they signify knowledge instead of definitions.

Anderson and Pearson (1984) further explained the schema theory by defining it as “a model for representing how knowledge is stored in human memory” (p. 259), adding that the “reader’s schema is a structure that facilitates planful retrieval of text information from memory and permits reconstruction of elements that were not learned or have been forgotten” (p. 285). Additionally, the earlier definitions of schemas were thought of as rigid, solid structures while Kintsch (1998) wrote that those fixed
parameters were eventually changed to include structures that were much less strictly defined; instead, they were much more fluid.

Humans have to process the world with the images detected by their own eyes, and those actions or images can update how they feel about the world and how to behave in it (Arbib, Conklin, & Hill, 1987). “In a new situation we can recognize familiar things in new relationships and use our knowledge of those things and our perception of the relationships to guide our behavior in that situation” (Arbib, Conklin, and Hill, 1987, p. 7). The authors said that people all firmly rely on their knowledge of the world and do so using a long-term knowledge model and a short-term knowledge model. For the long-term knowledge model, it represents everything people feel about their lives, whether they think about it consciously or unconsciously. The short-term model exemplifies where people are at during a single point in their lives—what their current goals and current place are in the world. Both of these models are needed and can show examples of schemas, as well as how people view the world. The image that people see with their own eyes helps them determine their expectations. Arbib, Conklin, and Hill (1987) gave the example that if people opened a door in a bedroom and then discovered they were looking into a meadow, it would be very hard for them to comprehend because they would not be used to seeing that happen.

Since schema theory is a way to mediate between people and how they see the world, it is useful for this study because a person’s schema determines how he or she views the world around them. People who have grown up in a rural community or on a
farm are more likely to have personal connections to agriculture, which would affect how they talk about agriculture when they interact with the consumers around them.

A person’s beliefs are formed by directly observing or receiving information from other sources about a certain thing, and a person’s beliefs will end up determining how he or she views the world (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Duncan and Broyles (2006) wrote that the perception and knowledge of agriculture held by high school students are largely dependent on how they are influenced by media, involvement in agricultural clubs such as FFA and 4-H, and their families. The media can also greatly influence the public about agriculture. According to Whitaker and Dyer (2000), journalists started covering food safety and environmental issues in the early 1980s; by then, the issues were incredibly complex, leaving journalists feeling overwhelmed. “Whereas journalists had been trained in how to write, they were ill-equipped to fully understand their influence in the complex relationship between producers and consumers” (Whitaker & Dyer, 2000, p. 125). For their study, Whitaker and Dyer (2000) evaluated three agricultural periodicals and three news periodicals from 1987 to 1996, and they found that when the periodicals cited sources, most of them cited either educational institutions or governmental agencies as their primary sources. However, they also found that nearly all of the news magazines cited activist sources while almost all of the agricultural magazines cited agricultural sources. Whitaker and Dyer (2000) recommended that editors and journalists should not sensationalize issues, and they encouraged readers to be cautious when reading articles so they are not influenced by biased reporting about topics, especially on agricultural issues.
To that end, “If parents are influenced by ill-informed journalists, they may not encourage their children to enroll in a high school agriculture class or pursue an agricultural degree in college” (Duncan & Broyles, 2006, p. 16), which can lead to fewer people learning about agriculture or pursuing a career in agribusiness. The National Research Council (1988) also states that the media have highlighted the negative issues in farming, which could potentially discourage high school graduates from going into an agricultural career. Additionally, there has been an issue with students not being interested in going into farming or agribusiness, and the National Research Council (1988) said part of the issue was that some farmers were encouraging their children to look into other careers.

With less than 1% of the U.S. population working in farming, now more than ever, people rely on media to learn about agriculture, meaning that is the schema they have to use as background (Duncan & Broyles, 2006; National Research Council, 1988). This theory fits with this study because a person’s schema can affect how they view the world in a variety of ways, including industries such as agriculture.

Additional Research

While the above three theories were fundamental to this study, similar studies were also reviewed to gain additional background information. Glaze, Edgar, Rutherford, and Rhoades-Buck (2013) conducted a qualitative study using five focus groups to receive feedback on the perceptions college students held about rural America. They selected images from newspapers and asked students what they saw in these images. Out
of the group of college students who came from an agricultural background, 85% said they would prefer to go back to a rural area after graduating. While many of them said living in an urban community while they were still single would be fine, they said once they married and had kids, they would rather raise their families in a rural community. When participants were asked what stopped people from moving back to rural areas, one theme was *economics*, adding that *jobs* and *money* were to be found in the large urban areas. Another theme was *convenience*. Some of the participants said they had become used to being near restaurants, schools, and medical care. They said that their generation was used to getting everything they wanted instantly, and they realized it would be a transition to go back to driving half an hour or an hour to get to these different amenities. The urban group also thought it would be difficult to get out and meet people to date in rural communities.

Some of the study participants said that the media shares a “negative connotation” of rural America with their viewers and listeners (Glaze, Edgar, Rutherford, & Rhoades-Buck, 2013, p. 20). The college students from urban backgrounds said that the media could help influence where they decided to live. However, this study also showed that both the rural and urban groups represented in the focus groups had misconceptions about rural America. Students from the rural group believed that people who were not from an agricultural background would see all of the images used in this study as negative, which is not what happened. The students who came from urban backgrounds believed the people from the agricultural backgrounds would be able to relate to the images of rural
America, and their study supported that claim. One misconception from the urban group is that they thought everyone who lived in rural communities either worked in agriculture or on farms (Glaze, Edgar, Rutherford, & Rhoades-Buck, 2013).

Other noteworthy conclusions included that having a strong work ethic or being a hard worker was integral to rural life. Additionally, most participants thought that people living in rural America were not low-income, but they believed the stereotype that ‘people living in rural areas are usually low-income’ was a view commonly held by urban residents. Lastly, the participants thought that there were greater job opportunities in the cities, but they would prefer to live in a rural community as long as they had some of the conveniences of living near a city.

Hess and Trexler (2011) conducted a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews to interview upper elementary school students in California. The goal of their study was to ascertain what these students understood about agricultural and food concepts. Out of the 18 study participants, none of them raised animals or grew plants. However, three participants said they visited their grandparents’ family farms, and eight participants had gone on a field trip to a farm. Three of the 18 participants did not have any experience with agriculture. Instead of claiming that their food came from grocery stores, one student explained that eggs come from chickens and that cheese, milk, and meat came from cows. However, when he was asked about what he meant by “tending the field,” the student explained that the farmer plowed with a horse, which is not used by people in agriculture today (Hess & Trexler, 2011, p. 156). Another student said that he
thought farms were close by, that other countries had farms as well, but that most of the farms were located in California. While some of the students had a general idea of agriculture, they did not have the proper understanding, or schema, to fill in a more detailed, expanded version of modern agriculture. “The study revealed informants lacked background that supported the construction of agricultural knowledge and understanding” (Hess & Trexler, 2011, p. 159).

Van Gundy, Stracuzzi, Rebellon, Tucker, and Cohn (2011) looked at survey data from a rural youth sample and an urban youth sample in New Hampshire to determine how detachment and community attachment can be related to problem substance use, depressed mood, and what the authors called “delinquency net of social statuses, stress exposure, and psychosocial resources” (p. 294). Van Gundy et al. (2011) found that community detachment was related to the higher levels of depressed mood from the students they surveyed. They used the stress-process framework, which looks at how well-being is influenced by different factors, such as environmental stressors, social status, and coping and psychosocial resources. Further, stress fractures can include a person’s interaction with difficult environmental strains that may end up affecting well-being. Van Gundy et al. (2011) wrote “Stress experiences are structured by social statuses, such that some groups (e.g., the unemployed) are more likely than others (e.g., the employed) to experience hardship and adversity. Exposure to stress is often conceptualized and assessed as ‘life events’” (p. 296). Youth that grow up in rural areas may be “particularly susceptible to the damaging effects of stress exposure,” but then
their strong attachment to their communities shielded than from the stress exposure compared to their urban youth counterparts (Van Gundy et al., 2011, p. 311). Because the researcher wanted to interview people who had grown up on a farm, those participants may have had similar experiences shaping them as the youth in the study by Van Gundy et al. (2011) had, which would help determine how they felt about growing up in rural communities compared to their peers.

Since there is a disconnect between people living in rural and urban areas (National Research Council, 1988), agricultural commodity groups have expressed concern that traditional agriculture has not been portrayed accurately. When agriculture is not portrayed accurately, then people who do not interact with agriculture very often can receive some unrealistic or outdated views about what it entails. To address that question, Specht and Buck (2014) did a study asking undergraduate students questions about images from agricultural advertising campaigns.

For their study, Specht and Buck (2014) had the study participants judge five video clips on realism, likeability, and quality of perceived animal treatment (p. 42). The video clips included the California “Happy Cows” videos about natural calf-rearing and a farm-tour video showing how large-scale dairy businesses raise calves. The participants stated that they enjoyed both sets of videos (educational video content about modern dairy practices versus the “Happy Cows” commercials). However, the students surveyed who did not have as much background with agriculture shared that they liked the educational content more than the less realistic “Happy Cows” commercials.
Additionally, the videos that were more informational were rated higher by students for perceived quality of animal care as well as realism.

The researchers of this study encouraged people to move away from merely using funny promotional advertisements and instead recommended that they talk about agriculture using factual information in advertising since the vast majority of our society is removed from agriculture. Presenting facts about agriculture in advertising can help educate people about what traditional, or modern, agriculture actually entails instead of promoting false, outdated information about agriculture to Americans. This study was important research for this thesis because it gives a clearer idea of what the public believes happens in agriculture and how they respond to media images about agriculture.

**Summary**

This chapter described and gave examples of the three theories that were used for this study, which were: the self presentation theory, the cognitive dissonance theory, and the schema theory. These three theories were pivotal for guiding this study to see how the participants represented agriculture, whether or not they felt they needed to change when they talked with people who believed differently than they did, and whether or not they had the schema, also known as cognitive memory structures or previous experience, readily available to understand what agriculture was like in the nation today.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The previous two chapters discussed the history of agriculture in Ohio and how agriculture has evolved over the past 100 years, as well as some issues facing agriculture since more consumers are no longer connected to the farm. The researcher used the self presentation theory, the cognitive dissonance theory, and the schema theory for this qualitative study. In this third chapter, the research design will be explained in detail.

Problem Statement

More and more people are leaving rural America, and the problem is that there is a growing disconnect between people living in rural and urban communities (National Research Council, 1988). With more and more people being disconnected from agriculture, there has been an increase in outreach by the agricultural community to reach out to consumers via SuperBowl commercials, social media, and agricultural experiences, such as farmers markets, county fairs, and agritourism, there is still a need to interact with consumers since oftentimes people living in urban and suburban areas have paradoxical views of rural communities. According to the Kellogg Foundation (2005), “Rural America offers a particular quality of life including serenity and aesthetic surroundings, and yet it is plagued by lack of opportunities, including access to cultural activities” (p.
An issue in agriculture today is that its future “rests in the hands” of the population of the United States—people who do not live on a farm and “have little to no understanding of agriculture” (Doerfert, p. 11).

As there is an increase in society with people being more health conscious and wanting to consume healthy foods, there is also a greater interest from consumers about where their food comes from (Inwood et al., 2009). With that societal shift, since consumers are disconnected from food production in America, there has been an increase in interest with “local foods” and farmers markets where consumers can talk directly with producers about the food they produce and how it is grown (Inwood et al., 2009). Consumers genuinely want to know more about where their food comes from and how it is produced in Ohio and in this country (Inwood et al., 2009). People from Ohio should be studied because, according to the Ohio Department of Agriculture (2013), there are 75,000 farms in Ohio.

With more people than ever before leaving the farm after college to live in urban communities, a study was needed to ascertain whether these people who grew up connected to agriculture talk with their fellow consumers about their experiences in agriculture, and if they are talking to consumers, to learn what they are saying.

Research Objectives

The purpose of this study was to learn how The Ohio State University’s College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES) undergraduate alumni talk with consumers about agriculture in their day-to-day lives. The research objectives for
this study are below:

1. To examine the reasoning behind individuals’ decision on whether or not they decided to return to the farm after college.

2. To examine the messages that individuals share with consumers they interact with in urban and suburban areas.

3. To describe what individuals with agricultural backgrounds believe are the biggest obstacles farmers face as they try to engage with consumers.

**Research Design**

This study was constructed as a basic qualitative study with the researcher using focused telephone interviews (Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh, 2002). This style of a qualitative study, according to Ary et al. (2002), means “subjects are free to answer in their own words rather than having to choose from predetermined options, as in a survey. The unstructured, open-ended format permits greater flexibility and responsiveness to emerging issues for the participants” (p. 27).

According to Ary et al. (2002), telephone interviews have similar results compared to in-person interviews. Additionally, “Major advantages are lower cost and faster completion, with relatively high response rates. Telephone interviews can be conducted over a relatively short time span with people scattered over a large geographic area” (Ary et al., 2002, p. 383). Over-the-phone interviews allowed the researcher and interview participants to have some interaction, although a disadvantage of the telephone
interviews is that less rapport is typically established compared to an in-person meeting.

Before the alumni were contacted, the researcher planned for a minimum of 20 interviews, or interviews would continue until the researcher and principal investigator jointly decided that data saturation had been reached. Ary et al. (2002) defined data saturation as something that occurs when no new information is being from the different respondents. When no new information is received, sampling for the survey should cease.

Population and Sample

The target population for this study consisted of alumni from The Ohio State University who earned their bachelor’s degrees from CFAES. This population includes 46,769 undergraduate alumni with recorded emails who were open to being reached via phone. To clean up the database for data collection, deceased alumni were removed, taking the population down to 35,372. Since the alumni were going to be contacted using email, alumni who only had a phone number listed were also eliminated from the sample. Next, CFAES alumni who only had a bachelor’s degree were selected bringing the population down to 29,576. People who had email restrictions were removed from the group, allowing a total of 27,015 alumni who stated that they could be contacted using their email addresses. Using a random numbers table, 100 alumni were randomly selected from the remaining listed alumni and contacted to participate. Random selection of the participants was implemented. This was crucial so that there would be no bias for selecting alumni with a certain major, of a certain age, or who lived in a certain community.
The Ohio State University was ranked 185th among the nation’s best public universities, and there are 15 colleges within Ohio State. The total enrollment at The Ohio State University as of 2015 was 63,964 (“Visitors,” 2015). CFAES offers 22 majors and 31 minors, and there are currently 3,175 undergraduate students and 549 graduate students in the college (“CFAES Fast Facts,” 2015). The mission of CFAES is: “to provide personal attention, career track options, and real-world learning experiences that prepare students for a career closely aligned with their personal interests” (“Mission,” 2015).

There is a higher likelihood that CFAES alumni are more interested in agriculture or have a background in agriculture compared to students who majored in degrees in different colleges on campus that did not have any overlap with agriculture.

**Instrumentation**

The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this research study (See Appendix A, approval protocol number: 2015E0075). Before beginning the recorded interview, verbal consent procedures were given (See Appendix F). The instrument used for this qualitative study was a questionnaire that was administered by the researcher over the phone for all 12 interviews (See Appendix G). The researcher developed the questions for this study after confirming the objectives for this study and looking through previous research. The first section of the questionnaire included a set of seven demographic questions. The second part of the questionnaire involved 22 open-ended questions, with several of them having further probing questions,
which Ary et al. (2002) defined as “questions used to clarify a response or that push a little further into a topic” (p. 396). Ary et al. (2002) also recommended that the questions go in good psychological order and are grouped together by content. The questions went from more conversational to more direct.

The first seven demographic questions allowed the researcher to gain an idea of the person’s age, type of setting in which he or she currently lives, the major of the degree he or she earned from Ohio State, as well as the year he or she graduated.

Questions one through six of the official interview asked for further background, such as where the individual grew up, whether the individual had any connection to agriculture, if the interviewee returned to his or her community after graduating from Ohio State, and whether or not the individual considered starting his or her own farm. This helped answer the first objective because it allowed the interviewee to share his or her reasons for leaving the farm after college, if he or she grew up on a farm.

The seventh and eighth questions related to Ohio State, what the interviewees believed was the main reason students do not move back to rural communities following graduation, and whether or not their classes at Ohio State taught them about talking to consumers about agriculture.

Questions nine through 16 asked the participants about whether or not they talk with consumers about agriculture and what those conversations typically entail. The remaining questions, 17 through 21, asked the interviewees about their opinions on how farmers could do a better job of interacting with consumers. Specifically, question 21
asked what interviewees believed was the greatest obstacle for farmers interacting with consumers who are no longer directly connected to agriculture.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study occurred from February to March 2015. The researcher set up and conducted all 12 of the interviews. Due to the constraints that only interviewing people in central Ohio would bring to the study, the researcher decided that telephone interviews should be utilized. The alumni were emailed to ask them to participate, and interested alumni responded to the researcher. Both the researcher and the interviewee would agree on a time, and the researcher would call the interview participant at the set time. The interviews lasted about 30 minutes on average, with one interview lasting almost an hour and a half. The researcher obtained verbal consent from each of the interviewees before recording the interviews. Additionally, the researcher used an audio recorder and carefully transcribed each interview for accuracy following the interview (See Appendix H). However, when the interviews were transcribed, the participants’ names were not written in the documents to preserve confidentiality of the interviewees, as promised.

The researcher asked the participants every question that was part of the questionnaire for fairness and accuracy so that each interview was conducted identically throughout the collection of data for this study.

A total of 100 Ohio State alumni were emailed to request their participation in this study. Within the email, the alumni were told about the study, that they were under no
obligation to participate, and they were reminded that their responses and information would remain confidential. In total, 80 alumni had accurate email addresses in the database, and all 80 of those alumni were contacted.

Five of the 100 people in the sample didn’t have email addresses listed so they were unable to be contacted like the rest of the sample. After randomly selecting 60 alumni out of the 100 pulled (with the five that were unable to be contacted via email), an introductory email (See Appendix B) was sent to 60 alumni on Monday, February 16, 2015. Out of the 60 alumni contacted, eight email addresses bounced back. Out of the 100, the researcher randomly selected eight more alumni and emailed them. With those eight new alumni, two emails came back, and the researcher emailed two more people so that a total of 60 alumni would receive the emails. Six people responded and completed interviews with the researcher.

The second reminder email (See Appendix C) was sent out one week later on Monday, February 23, 2015. The researcher heard back from two alumni after this email and completed interviews with both of them. The third invitation email (See Appendix D) was sent out on Saturday, February 28, and the researcher did not receive any responses following that email.

There were still 24 people left out of the 100-person data sample who had not been contacted. The researcher emailed the introductory email to that group of 24 people on Monday, March 2, 2015. Four emails bounced back from that group, meaning a total of 20 alumni received the introductory email. After the introductory email was sent, two
alumni responded and completed interviews with the researcher. The researcher sent out
the second email on Wednesday, March 4, 2015, and heard back from two people,
completing interviews with both of them. The third email inviting people to participate
was sent out on Monday, March 9, 2015, and the researcher did not hear from anyone
else. Since some time passed, the researcher sent out a final email (See Appendix E) to all
64 of the alumni on Thursday, March 12, 2015, to see if any more alumni would
participate but did not hear back from any other alumni.

Incentives were offered to study participants who completed interviews. The
incentives were paid for by the researcher, and everyone who participated by doing an
interview was entered into a drawing to receive a $50 Texas Roadhouse gift card, a $50
Outback gift card, or a $50 Olive Garden gift card. Each person whose name was
randomly drawn received one of the three gift cards. The gift cards recipients were
notified by Wednesday, April 22.

Data Analysis

All data was stored securely on the researcher’s computer. After each over-the-
phone interview, the researcher transcribed the interview carefully to ensure the
participants’ quotes were accurate. After the interviews were transcribed, the researcher
printed off each interview on different colored pieces of paper to represent each
participant. The researcher then cut up the interviews into the different answers for each
question before reviewing the themes that were seen in the interviews. The researcher
also contacted six of the 12 interview participants after the interviews were transcribed to
review their quotes with them for triangulation and confirm any questions after transcribing the interviews and looking at the data. The interviewer eventually separated the participants’ responses into different themes, such as work ethic, GMOs, and perception. All of these themes were reviewed and placed under the three research objectives that were determined prior to this study. Quotes from the interviews were used to showcase major and minor themes that were located in each.

Reliability and Validity

According to Ary et al. (2002), “qualitative research always depends on measurement” (p. 242). Validity is critical for people reading the study to ensure that the information presented is accurate. Ary et al. (2002) defined validity as “The extent to which an instrument measured what it claimed to measure” (p. 242). Credibility, or believability, is extremely important for qualitative studies to illustrate the truthfulness of the inquiries. “Credibility or truth value involves how well the researcher has established confidence in the findings based on the research design, participants, and context” (Ary et al., 2002, p. 452). The researcher worked to represent the responses of the participants as accurately as possible by using meticulous transcription and triangulation.

Both the researcher and the principal investigator from The Ohio State University determined the validity of the questions, allowing the validity of the claims to be based on consensus. The principal investigator reviewed these questions before approving them for final use, and she had excellent knowledge of agriculture and agricultural issues in the United States. The researcher also checked with six out of the 12 interview participants
by contacting them later to confirm the transcribed quotes were accurate, which allowed for triangulation. Researchers can use triangulation to determine the dependability, or consistency, of a qualitative study (Ary et al., 2002). Since Ary et al. recommended an audit trail for qualitative studies, the researcher kept copious notes and records of when participants were interviewed, etc. For transferability, the findings from this research could be applied to similar studies, or people who were similar to those interviewed for this study. The researcher worked to provide a “thick description” so other researchers can see whether or not transferability is suitable for their own studies (Ary et al, 2002, p. 454).

Reliability is another important factor when researchers are working on qualitative studies. According to Ary et al. (2002) “Reliability is concerned with how consistently you are measuring whatever you are measuring” (p. 251). The researcher kept careful records to ensure reliability was established in this study through documentation. According to Ary et al. (2002), a key focus for interviewers that conduct interviews in person or over the phone is that they “…ask the questions in such a way as to obtain valid responses and to record the responses accurately and completely” (p. 395). Reliability was reached because all of the interviews with the CFAES alumni were transcribed for accuracy, and the principal investigator checked all of the transcripts for accuracy. The principal investigator oversaw the open coding process for this study.

The researcher conducted every interview for this study. However, this researcher was aware of potential bias because she grew up on a farm in Ohio before moving to an
urban area for a new job opportunity, and promoting agriculture is something about which she is passionate. According to Ary et al. (2002), bias “may result from selective observations, hearing only what one wants to hear, or allowing personal attitudes, preferences, and feelings to affect interpretation of data” (p. 454). However, Ary et al. also offered some suggestions for addressing issues of bias so that the study would not be tainted. The most common way to combat bias is reflexivity, which is defined as “the use of self-reflection to recognize one’s own biases and to actively seek them out” (p. 454).

There are several similarities between the researcher and the people interviewed for this study. Like the interview participants, at the time of this study, the researcher was a graduate student in Ohio State’s CFAES. Therefore, the researcher most likely shared similar interests with other people who graduated from CFAES. The researcher also works for an agency that has some overlap with Ohio agriculture.

Noting these similarities, the researcher worked to prevent potential bias in this study by not straying from the questions approved for the interview and using reflexivity. The researcher did not share her opinions before, during, or after the interview. The researcher actively worked to try and not react to what the participants told her during the interviews, which stopped the participants from changing their answers or views since they would not be influenced by the responses of the researcher. Lastly, the researcher recorded all interviews using an audio recorder to ensure that the interview script and quotes transcribed after the interview would be accurate.
Summary

This methodology chapter explained the methods used to conduct this study, which described how alumni of The Ohio State University’s CFAES were contacted to participate in being interviewed about their backgrounds with agriculture and their experience in talking with consumers about agriculture. This was a qualitative study with the researcher identifying alumni by random selection and reaching out to these alumni via email to participate. A sample of eight men and four women participated in these interviews, and after these interviews were transcribed, the data from those interviews was analyzed with qualitative open coding.
Chapter 4: Findings

Food is incredibly important in our society today, and it is crucial for humans to consume so they have energy and their bodies can function properly. More than ever, with consumers now being two or more generations removed from the farm, there is a greater disconnect between people living in urban and rural communities. The purpose of this study is to ascertain if people leaving rural communities for urban communities are talking to the consumers around them about agriculture, as well as to find out why they left rural communities, and what participants believe are the biggest obstacles farmers face today when trying to engage consumers who are no longer connected to the farm. If Ohio State alumni are talking about agriculture, researchers should know what they are saying about agriculture because consumers are so far removed from agriculture.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the reasoning behind individuals’ decision on whether or not they decided to return to the farm after college.

2. To examine the messages that individuals share with consumers they interact with in urban and suburban areas.

3. To describe what individuals with agricultural backgrounds believe are the
biggest obstacles farmers face as they try to engage with consumers.

This qualitative study collected data from 12 over-the-phone interviews, with eight men and four women participating. The researcher collected the data and used open coding to analyze the responses of the participants. This chapter shares the themes that emerged in each of the four research objectives. The first few sections address specific demographics of the participants.

Where They Grew Up

The participants grew up with different backgrounds (See Table 1). Eleven of the 12 participants grew up in Ohio, while one male participant grew up in Connecticut. Of the 11 participants who grew up in Ohio, two of the participants (both females) grew up in Wood County in northwest Ohio, while two other participants (one male and one female) grew up in Huron County in north-central Ohio. Three of the participants (all male) grew up in Franklin County in central Ohio. Three of the participants (two males, one female) grew up near Cincinnati in southwest Ohio. One male participant grew up in Lawrence County “down on the Ohio River” at the very southern part of the state.

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Table 1. Where Study Participants Grew Up
Their Ages, Years They Graduated, and Majors

Participant 1 was age 65 (See Table 2 for the ages of participants), and majored in animal nutrition when he graduated from Ohio State in 1971 before going elsewhere for graduate work. Participant 2 was 63, majored in dairy technology when he graduated from Ohio State in 1974, and he did not go to graduate school. Participant 3 was 45 years old, and he majored in agronomy when he graduated with his bachelor’s degree in 1993. He then went on to earn his master’s degree in soil science in 1997 from Ohio State. Participant 4, age 60, graduated from Ohio State with a bachelor’s degree in wildlife management in 1986. Participant 5, age 60, graduated with her bachelor’s degree, majoring in agriculture in 1978 before going back to school at Ohio State and earning her master’s degree in agricultural education and supervision in 1991. Participant 6, age 67, did a dual major in agricultural education and agronomy when he graduated from Ohio State in 1969. He returned to Ohio State to earn his master’s degree in vocational/technical administration and supervision in 1973. Participant 7, age 37, majored in agribusiness and applied economics when he graduated from Ohio State in 2000 before going elsewhere for graduate school. Participant 8 was 27, and she majored in turf grass management when she graduated from Ohio State in 2009. She went to another school for her master’s degree. Participant 9, age 32, majored in agricultural education when he graduated from Ohio State in 2007, before attending a different school for his graduate education. Participant 10 was 51 years old, and she majored in greenhouse management and production when she graduated from Ohio State in 1983.
Participant 11, age 58, majored in horticulture when he graduated from Ohio State in 1979. Participant 12, age 36, majored in animal science while at Ohio State and graduated in 2001. Seven of the 12 participants attended graduate school, with three of them going back to The Ohio State University for their graduate work.

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Table 2. Ages of Participants

*Connections to Agriculture Growing Up*

Five of the participants grew up on a family farm. A total of three participants had family members who farmed, such as grandparents or uncles. Of the other four participants, two said they had no connection to agriculture growing up. Participant 2 grew up in Franklin County and said he lived in Worthington, which was a large farming community at the time, and he was familiar with agriculture because his father was extremely connected to the dairy industry and Ohio State. Participant 11 grew up in
Cincinnati, but he said that their family was always out in the country visiting family or friends who had farms.

*Types of Farms/Commodities*

This next question applied to the five participants who did grow up on a farm. The responses received from these participants were mixed. Three participants grew up on grain and livestock farms, one grew up on a livestock farm, and the last grew up on a grain farm (See Table 3). These farms varied in size.

For example, Participant 4 said his family’s farm in southern Ohio consisted of 200 acres and approximately 40 head of beef cattle and 30 milking cows. Participant 6 said his family’s farm was comprised of dairy, hogs, and cattle, and they also raised tobacco, corn, and soybeans. He said their family had two different tracts with his grandfather’s farm having about 100 acres, and then his dad purchased a farm that had an additional 250 acres. Eventually, 90 acres of that 250-acre tract was turned into a golf course. Participant 12 said that her family farmed about 17 acres, and her dad also cash-rented. Their family grew soybeans, corn, wheat, and hay in the summer. She also said they raised horses, chickens, rabbits, and dairy cattle.

Participant 8 said her family had a small sheep farm, with a maximum of about 15 sheep. Participant 3 grew up in southwestern Franklin County and said his family primarily had a grain farm of about 650 acres of corn and soybeans until they scaled back to about 220 acres, focusing more on growing fruits and vegetables.
Parents’ Occupations

The majority (five) of the participants’ mothers were homemakers, housekeepers, or stay-at-home mothers. Three participants had fathers who were in occupations that could be connected with agriculture, such as dairy technologist, a diesel mechanic, and a mechanic/Buick dealership co-owner.

Finally, four participants said that their fathers were farmers, with Participant 3 saying that both of his parents were farmers. Three out of those four participants said their fathers farmed and had second jobs, as an insurance agent, a truck driver, and the owner of a food brokerage (“They represent several different food manufacturers/companies and sell their products”).

Current Job in the Agriculture Field

The participants fell into one of three categories: working in the agricultural field, their current jobs were not farming but were related to agriculture, or they were not working in an agricultural field (See Table 4). Participants 2, 3, and 10 are listed as
farmers or ranchers. Participant 2 operates and is the co-owner of a creamery in Ohio. Participant 3 farms and works as assistant manager of a large farm show. Participant 10, who lives in Colorado, said that she works for a greenhouse that grows nursery stock, holiday potted plants, and annuals. She also raises beef cattle with her husband, and they grow hay as well.

Additionally, five participants said that their jobs were not farming, but were in the agricultural field. Participant 4 said that he works for the Natural Resources Conservation Service, an agency within the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in a county in western Ohio, and Participant 5 said that she retired from being a high school agriculture teacher and is now teaching in the agriculture department at a community college in Ohio. Participant 6 currently runs a bed and breakfast in a rural setting with his wife, but before retiring, he was a high school agriculture teacher for seven years and then was an administrator of agriculture programs at a career center for more than 24 years. Participant 8 said that she is a senior assistant superintendent at an 18-hole golf course in Colorado. Lastly, Participant 11 said that he worked in sales for Bobcat construction equipment in Pittsburgh to homeowners, universities, agriculture, landscape, and municipal accounts.

Four participants said that their jobs were not in the agriculture field. One participant works for General Electric selling locomotives, another is a homemaker (although before staying home with her kids, she worked at a therapeutic horseback riding farm as well as a 4-H Extension agent in Georgia), a third participant is a retired
oral surgeon, and the fourth works for the Army Reserve.

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Table 4. Participants' Jobs Relating to Agriculture

Objective 1: To examine the reasoning behind individuals’ decision on whether or not they decided to return to the farm after college.

Returning to the Rural Community or Moving Away

Out of the 12 participants interviewed, 11 moved away and did not return to the communities where they grew up. Of the five interview participants who grew up on a farm, the majority said they did not return to the rural community where they grew up after graduating from The Ohio State University. Three of the five participants said that they moved someplace else after graduating. Participant 4 said that he moved several times before moving to west-central Ohio where he lives now. Participant 8 said she moved to Pennsylvania after graduating for graduate school and eventually moved to Colorado for work. Participant 12 said she also moved out to Pennsylvania after...
graduating for her husband’s job, until they were transferred to Georgia.

Participant 6 said that he returned to his home community and worked there for two years before receiving another job opportunity, eventually leading to him earning his graduate degree from Ohio State. He now lives in a different part of the state.

Participant 3 was the only one who said that he ended up returning to the same community, and he now lives two miles from where he grew up.

Consider Returning to the Farm or Starting Their Own Farm

When asked if they considered returning to farm or to start a farm of their own, three of the five participants who grew up on a farm said they had considered moving back to their rural community to farm. Participant 12 said she considered moving back to the community where she grew up, adding “it just hasn’t worked out that way,” because her husband’s job has taken them to different locations.

Participant 3 returned to his home community, and he farms 325 acres on his own, in addition to his full-time job, and he also helps his parents with their agriculture-entertainment business. “My goal was always to have my own farm, and I have it now,” he said on moving back. “I wanted my own farm, but it’s still, you farm with your family.” He added, “I have my own land, I have my own equipment, things like that. I mean, we still share equipment back and forth and things, but … I fill out my own tax forms.”

“Yes, I thought about it,” said Participant 6 when asked about whether or not he considered moving back to the farm where he grew up. “Had an opportunity, but … the
teaching position was more, I guess, of a possibility at that that point … We did own five
acres when our kids were growing up, here in Clark County where we live now.” He
added that they wanted to live on a farm where their kids raise livestock for 4-H, which
they did.

The two participants who said they did not consider returning to the farm where
they grew up said jobs and a career kept them from returning.

Main Reasons Why College Students Do Not Move Back to a Rural Community After
Graduating

When asked why students who graduate from a university like Ohio State do not
move back to a rural community following graduation, major themes that emerged
included a lack of jobs and the family farm may not be large enough or profitable enough
to support more families (See Table 5). Nearly all of the participants mentioned the lack
of jobs as an issue. Participant 4, who now works for the U.S. Department of Agriculture,
talked about growing up in southern Ohio. “The opportunities for jobs are not nearly as
broad as they might be in a whole host of other areas,” he said, adding that if students do
not want to move back to the farm, but they still want to work in agriculture, they will
need to go where the jobs are located.

Participant 8 said that the market for jobs is not there like it once was. “And
they’re not involved as much in the family farm or they don’t enjoy it as much as their
parents did,” she said. “Or they got farther in their degree and education than their
parents did, kind of a way to move away, too.” Participant 12 said the difficulty of farm
life can persuade some college graduates to choose different career paths, adding

It’s hard work. And I think that some people don’t want to go back to that hard work, either. I think just the … opportunity that’s there is not as strong as the income they could get going elsewhere is probably a big part of it, or they don’t want to go back to the hard work.

Participant 10 said, “Too many times, growing up in agriculture or a small farm, you don’t have a lot of opportunities, and you see on TV how the other half lives, and I think too many people think the grass is greener,” she said. “And so, they don’t wind up returning until after they have some life experience.”

Another theme that was expressed by three of the 12 participants was that the family farm may not be large enough to support more than one family, especially not a son or daughter returning from college who may one day have a family to support. Participant 6 returned to his rural community for two years before moving to earn his master’s degree, and he said that job opportunities stop college graduates from returning to the farm, and a student’s options are limited to their family’s farm or if they marry into a farm situation. He said that his family’s farm situation wasn’t big enough to support two or three families, which limited his opportunity there. “But that’s … same story for a lot of kids I guess who go to Ohio State and finish with a degree,” he said. “You have to have an awfully large family farm operation in order to be able to return home.”

Participant 3 interviews students for his role at work. In response to the question, he said, “And a lot of my students that I hire … the opportunity isn’t there for them at the
current time to go back to the farm. The desire’s there. But the opportunity isn’t.”

Participant 2 talked in great detail about how the focus on high volume, low-margi
low-value commodities “is ultimately an economically extractive model of agri
ture in business.” He explained that agricultural commodities such as corn and soybeans were raised at a large scale and were transported out of the state, which halted the vibrancy of rural communities that were based on a cycling of money within the community that supported everything from the local grain mill to the local diesel truck shop. He said when the agricultural commodities left the community, then so did the local grain mill and diesel truck shop, which he said was the reason why there are fewer jobs for college graduates in rural communities now.

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Table 5. Main Reasons Why College Students Do Not Move Back to a Rural Community After College
Positive or Negative Experiences in Agriculture

Major themes emerging from this section were that the majority of the participants said that their experiences in agriculture were positive, with another theme being that their experiences were positive because they enjoyed spending time with family, and another theme being that they received a strong work ethic.

While Participant 12 said that her experience “… allowed me to become educated to know where our food comes from, and the animals, how to support them,” she said, explaining that she showed livestock in 4-H, from rabbits, chickens, dairy cattle, goats, and horses. “It was a very positive upbringing.”

Similarly, Participant 3 said his upbringing on a farm gave him a solid foundation for the rest of his life. Participant 3 said,

Everything that I did growing up on the farm has given me a foundation of where I am today and what I’ve done. How to be a good manager of money, how to fix and repair things on the farm or at my home. How to appreciate … the land. How to take care of what is given to us. And realize that we’re here … for a short period of time. And I want to leave it better than what it was given to me.

Something frequently mentioned in this section of the study was that the participants’ experiences in agriculture were positive because they enjoyed being with their family. Participant 10 said she used to help her grandpa during the summer months when they were harvesting, adding that he grew mostly corn, as well as some tomatoes and strawberries. Participant 4 talked about how farming was something he personally
enjoyed because it involved spending time with family members he liked and wanted to be around, such as his grandfather, his dad, and his brothers. Participant 11 said that he enjoyed visiting the farms of family friends because his family enjoyed being outside hunting and fishing.

While Participant 7 said that he spent his first three years of life living in Nigeria in West Africa, he said he did have a relatively positive exposure to agriculture, watching the locals work with their crop yields and deal with their challenges with flooding. But he said when they moved to the U.S. in central Ohio, his family lived in developed neighborhoods, and “other than the farm fields that were being gentrified and turned into housing developments, that was my only exposure.”

Participants 8 and 12 indicated that their upbringing gave them a very good work ethic. Participant 8 said that her experience actually helped her succeed further in her career because she was used to working 24/7 on her family’s farm and knew the importance of hard work.

Objective 2: To examine the messages that participants share with consumers they interact with in urban and suburban areas.

Whether Ohio State Classes Taught You about Talking to Consumers About Agriculture

Out of the 12 participants, the participants said they did not learn how to talk to consumers about agriculture in their classes at Ohio State, while some other participants said yes, they learned how to talk to consumers about agriculture from their classes. Participant 2 said they did not learn how to talk to consumers about agriculture in his
classes because it wasn’t even an issue at that time. “Our problems in agriculture were solving the problems,” he said. “They weren’t PR problems.” He continued by saying that people used to be committed to making food as though they were making it for their own family, and in the dairy industry, agriculturists were taught that the milk was perfect when it came from the cow, “and it was our job to screw it up as little as we could and get it right to consumers.” Participant 2 continued by saying that the dairy industry wasn’t just a commercial industry, but he considered it a sacred responsibility to provide food to communities. He said,

It’s very difficult for me to communicate to people of your generation how different the world was 50 years ago. Because it was profoundly different. I mean, this isn’t what we really hear about today. … And that’s why agriculture has a PR problem. If they were still following the ethos of my father’s generation, there wouldn’t be a PR problem.

Participant 8, who now lives in Colorado, said that organic products were starting to grow in popularity while she was in college, and she wished her classes would have informed the students more about those products. She said she continues to do research on her own, and “Still today I’m trying to push people away from organic, but they just don’t listen.”

Some of the other participants said that they did learn to talk about agriculture with consumers in their classes at Ohio State. Participant 5 said she received good information on how to talk to consumers about agriculture in her classes, specifically in
some agricultural economic and rural sociology classes. She said the classes really helped
the students see the “the need and the benefits of talking to people about agriculture or
commodities,” adding that the courses were taught in the 1970s so things have changed
since then, but she said that at the time, the classes helped students stay up-to-date on
current topics.

Participant 3 said that his speech class was really important in learning how to be
a better communicator. “Anytime you can learn how to speak better, it’s a good thing,”
he said. Participant 10 said she learned how to talk to consumers about agriculture during
her time at Ohio State. She said that originally she had no idea how difficult it was to
raise livestock and how much work it took for farmers to grow food for the world until
she went to college.

Talking about Agriculture with Consumers Regularly

When participants were asked whether or not they talked about agriculture
regularly with the consumers they interacted with on a regular basis at work or during the
week, study participants said they did talk with consumers about agriculture, and that
they talked about agriculture frequently with their family members.

Since the majority (10) of the participants said they talked about agriculture often,
four of the 10 participants said they talked about agriculture “all the time.” The creamery
owner, Participant 2, said that he talks with people constantly, adding that it is half of
what he does.

Participant 6, who owns a bed and breakfast, said that in the small rural
community where he lives, the grain elevator is close by. He said that there are a few big
feedlots and dairy operations in the area that have a lot of guests, such as veterinarians
and buyers, come in from all over the world and some of them stay at his bed and
breakfast. “As soon as I get an opportunity, I mention to them that I’m a former ag
teacher, and we get to talk a little farm stuff along the way, so … it’s a lot of fun.”

Another theme that emerged was that the participants talked about agriculture
frequently with their family members. Participant 5, who is currently teaching in the
agriculture department at a community college and is a retired high school agriculture
teacher, said that while she talks to other people about agriculture, she also talks to her
family about agriculture. Her husband works in agriculture, her daughter is a teacher, and
her son-in-law is a Syngenta seed salesman. Participant 1, who is a retired oral surgeon,
said that his son is an organic farmer so they talk about that together, and Participant 8
said that she talks to her brother, a graduate student at Ohio State, about agriculture when
they “start arguing over chemicals applied to golf courses versus fields.”

Participant 3 said that he probably talked about agriculture three to four times a
week, and Participant 4 said that he probably talked “three or four times a month with a
consumer that would be a non-agricultural person.”

*Subjects That Come Up While Talking with Consumers*

Major themes that were seen when study participants were asked what types of
conversations typically came up with consumers included *food, organic foods, and food
safety.*
Participant 12 talked about living in a subdivision in Georgia with lots of stay-at-home mothers and how many of them have a negative attitude about where their food comes from. She said she would try to talk to the other moms about it, but they definitely have a negative connotation about it, specifically about the nation’s food supply and food sources. She continued by saying that so many are working toward going organic, saying there’s all of this stuff in our food and how it’s processed and how all of that negativity is out there. “And I just don’t feel like people are educated enough about how our food is processed,” she said. “There are so many negative TV shows and news programs and movies that it really diminishes that part of our life.”

Participant 1, the retired oral surgeon, said that he talks with his son, an organic farmer, about food frequently. “One of the things my son sort of taught me is, from his standpoint, it’s nice that it’s organic, but it’s probably better that it’s local,” he said.

Participant 4 also talked about how organic foods have become a noteworthy topic that comes up when people talk about agriculture. He said,

The organic movement, whether you’re pro or con, or you don’t care about organic, it’s probably helped consumers get a little bit more educated. … I may not always agree with their attitudes, but at least somebody’s talking to them, or they are doing their homework a little bit, on the quality of their food.

A third major theme seen in responses was food safety, specifically from Participants 3 and 10. Participant 10, who raises beef cattle with her husband, said that when she talks with consumers, she talks about their beef. “We’re talking beef, and we’re
generally just talking about, is it safe, and all the different chemicals you will find in beef in the … general course of buying food through a supermarket.” Participant 3 also talked about how people continue to push food safety. He said,

The safety factor that we have today is much more compared to what it was 20 or 30 years ago, and it’s all based upon technology. But, I think that people don’t understand. I think they still think the farmer goes out and just dumps things on the field, and the farmer doesn’t have the education and the resources to make good decisions. And, that really needs to be brought to the forefront of ‘hey, the technology we’re using today is far superior to what it took to put the man on the moon.’ I mean, using satellites, using censors, and using implements to reduce the amount of inputs we’re putting on, whether it’s pesticides or fertilizers. Sure, do we have problems? Yeah. I mean, we’ve got blue-green algae in lakes in Ohio. But, if we didn’t have the technology that we have today, it would be a whole lot worse.

Continuing with the food safety and organic themes, Participant 12 added that some of the stay-at-home mothers she interacts with are concerned about hormones in milk as well as pesticides and how bad they are. Participant 12 said,

So they’re not, they don’t necessarily understand the difference, because there’s still pesticides used, to an extent, with organic food. But they think, you know, it says organic, it’s so much better for you, no matter the cost. So there’s just not enough education out there. Or the word, the positive word is not as strong as the
negative word towards the food, our food supply, and how animals are treated when they are being, going through the processing plant, and all of that.

She said that hits close to home because her husband works for a company and sells meat on a large scale.

Whether or Not the Participants Initiate These Conversations About Agriculture

When the participants were asked about whether or not they initiated conversations with consumers about agriculture, five of the 12 participants said no, that they started conversations about 50% of the time, or some said yes, they did initiate conversations about agriculture.

Among the participants who said no, Participant 8 said she does not typically initiate conversations about agriculture, unless it comes up through talking about employment and her work ethic, because she has never been someone to gloat or talk about herself. “I don’t initiate the fact that I grew up with agriculture, even though some people know it by the way they see me and how I present myself,” she said.

Participant 12 also said she also didn’t initiate conversations about agriculture. When asked why she didn’t initiate them, Participant 12 said,

Because of the connotation that they all have about it, if they bring it up, I will add information, or try to add a positive light to it. Otherwise, if anything comes up, it’s regarding horses. I may initiate a conversation about horses, therapeutic horseback riding, but other than that, I don’t really, because there’s not really a lot of interest, otherwise.
Participant 4 said that initiating conversations about agriculture was typically not a part of his job. “My responsibilities typically would not be to talk specifically, whether it’s GMOs, or that quality of food or that sort of thing,” he said, adding that his focus is more to advocate for installation of conservation practices that keep soil on the land, protect water quality, and improve wildlife habitat.

Two of the participants said that they initiate conversations about 50% of the time. Participant 3 said the consumers around him know he farms so they will ask his opinion or ‘What is actually going on?’ He said, “A lot of times a question will be asked by them, and then other times, I’ll just tell them what we’re doing. And then that conversation leads to something else.” When asked why he initiated conversations about agriculture, Participant 3 said he does it to have uplifting and positive conversation and to let people know what’s going on.

Participant 5 also said she initiates talking about agriculture about 50% of the time, depending on the crowd she is with at the time. “I don’t mind initiating things, but it depends on what it is,” she said, “and what the topic is, or if I feel the need to continue talking about things like that, or even bring it up.” When asked why she chose to initiate these conversations, she said it is usually because she wants to get their opinions and find out their involvement in the topic she is dealing with at the time. Participant 5 said most of her friends know she and her spouse are involved in agriculture, and many of them are also involved in agriculture so it’s nice to talk with them about it.

Some participants said they did initiate conversations about agriculture. When
Participant 10 was asked whether or not people were receptive to talking about agriculture after she initiated these conversations, she said, “I think I do more listening than actually talking … And I don’t know if they care to listen to me pontificate, but I do just the same.” She continued by saying, “I would say for the most part, no, they’re generally not all that interested. But they appease me.”

Are the Conversations with Consumers Who Live in Rural, Urban, or Suburban Areas?

Some frequencies that were seen involved the participants talking to people in all three of these categories, people who grew up in rural areas, and people who grew up in urban and suburban areas.

Four of the 12 participants said they talked to people who fit in all three of the categories. Participant 12 said that where she was located in Georgia, she talked to people who were from urban and suburban areas. However, she said she talked to people from a rural background about agriculture when her family goes back to Ohio. “Probably when we travel to Ohio, and we’re there, we would probably talk more agricultural topics with our family and friends that live there, and they’re in a rural area, because it’s right smack dab in the middle of their life.” She said that people that live in rural areas were definitely more open to talk about agriculture than people living in urban or suburban areas.

Participant 5 said she also talked to people in all three categories, depending on the situation since she has friends who are involved in agriculture and friends who do not have that background. She said she always tries to accommodate people so they do not
feel out of place, especially since she talks about agriculture frequently, and her friends are usually very receptive. “They’ve known I’ve been in agriculture practically all my life. You know, we’re just good friends, and it’s a good thing,” she said. “And even if I don’t know the person, I can talk to them about agriculture.” Participant 5 said if a conversation about agriculture ever became testy or the other person seemed upset, she would know to back off, but that situation has never really happened. “I would just not pursue anything that would be upsetting,” she said. “I’m not one of those that ‘You have to do it this way, or else,’ you know?”

Participant 2 said he talks to people from the three different backgrounds, but he gets two different kinds of engagement from the people that did grow up in a rural area and the people who did not. He said that people who had family or friends with dairy farms would drink milk from the bulk tank or get it delivered to their doorstep in glass bottles with the cream on the top, and when they try the milk from his creamery, some of them cry. “It’s a powerful memory for people,” he said. “They haven’t had good milk for 30 years, to have good milk in their mouth, it takes them right back.”

Participant 2 added that people didn’t grow up with that rural background, “that don’t understand the dairy industry, then you know, you have wonderful engagement with them, because they want to know! They’re curious. It’s something they don’t know about.” He continued by saying that people are fascinated and hungry to get the real story. Participant 2 mentioned that the dairy industry in California talks about their “happy cows,” but their videos are made in New Zealand, which is inaccurate “because
they don’t have cows out walking on grass in California.” He said, “People are hungering for honesty. They’re hungering for openness.”

Participant 3 said that he talks to people from different backgrounds because the community he lives in is still kind of rural and suburban, and he said that when he talks to people from different backgrounds, they are very receptive. He said when he talks to people from more suburban areas, it is usually about agriculture issues, while when he talks to people from rural communities, they are usually farmers so “we’re talking about what we’re doing, not so much whether a GMO’s good or bad.”

Since Participant 3’s family has an agritainment business, he said when people visit his parents’ farm, they want to know how crops are grown and what it takes to grow a crop, “more of the nuts and bolts of how the crop is grown,” he said. He said their next questions ask whether pesticides were used on the fruits and vegetables, and if they are organic. When asked how he responds to those questions, he said, “Well, first of all, positive. And two, you tell them the truth.” He continued:

We say ‘no, it’s not organic, but here’s what we’re doing to reduce the amount of pesticides’ or ‘here’s what we’re doing to improve the quality of the fruit’ so that it’s safe for them and it’s safe for us. And the first thing I tell them is that, my family’s going to eat more than they ever will, so why would I endanger my family?

Three of the 12 participants talked to mostly people who grew up in rural areas about agriculture. Participant 4 said, “Probably rural, 90% of the time, simply because,
where I’m located at, western Ohio, is very much predominantly agriculture country.”
When asked how receptive people are about talking about agriculture, he said sometimes he can’t get away from talking about agriculture with people from rural areas. “That’s their world, that’s their life, so in a sense it’s mine, so typically we’re both yakking away.” Participant 4 continued by saying when he talks with people from urban areas about agriculture, “They’re very interested most of the time, if they have the time, they’re willing to listen, or at least have a conversation. And it depends on the subject matter as to how well it’s received.” Participant 11 also said when he talked with people about agriculture, the people were typically from a rural background.

Lastly, three participants said they talked more to people from urban and suburban areas. Participant 8 said that when talking about agriculture, people from urban areas are a little less receptive.

They don’t really like to hear what we do out on the farm, and I know things have changed, obviously, since I’ve been on the farm, but there are still some things that haven’t. … It kind of goes from like receptive to like understanding it to not understanding it at all, I would say. More of the urban people who are not understanding it, but when you get to like the rural areas, they’re kind of more understanding of practices and procedures that are taken out on the farm.

Participant 7 said he lived in one of the developing areas of Chicago, in west Chicago, where there are a lot of open farm fields, and his family’s home is a tenth of a mile from open farm fields. He said one of the big discussions in their neighborhood was
“about the neighboring corn fields and whether or not the farmers are planting corn or if that’s going to be a bare lot, and quite frankly, how fast the farmers are going to sell that land to developers to develop more housing.” He said it was a big topic of discussion because if farmers plant corn and till up the land, byproducts from the field will include field mice and bad allergies during harvest season. “So it’s really more just kind of how it affects the neighborhood, how it affects the home sales around us,” he said. Participant 7 added that lots of open farm fields keep the prices of houses stagnated, but after the farmland has been converted into neighborhoods and housing, there is a greater chance that the home prices in the neighborhood will go up.

Do Consumers Ask Them Questions about Agriculture?

Study participants said they did not receive questions from consumers about agriculture, and yet some said that they enjoyed answering questions about agriculture. Participant 7 said he only receives questions from other people because they are curious about why his bachelor’s degree is in agriculture.

Participant 4 said that for the most part, talking to consumers is an enjoyable process. Participant 8 said,

I enjoy answering them because the more people you can explain things to, the more you get on your side and they’re more willing to understand and accept what you’re doing, especially out on a golf course. It helps you out more, in a way, unless you answer it, then if you don’t answer it, then it kind of hurts your ability to do some of your agricultural practices that need to be done.

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Participant 9 said people have asked him what is the best way to plant tomatoes, or he will talk to people about how cows have four stomachs. He is their go-to person for general agriculture questions if they did not grow up in a rural community. Participant 9 said he enjoys it, adding “I work in education so any time I get to enlighten someone, it makes me happy.”

Participant 2 said he was extremely comfortable talking with consumers about agriculture—that is what he does. Participant 3 said he always enjoys answering questions from consumers. Participant 5 said that people ask her about the soils and animal science classes she teaches and how those are going during the semester. She said she enjoys answering people’s questions about agriculture.

Participant 6 said that he gets lots of questions from the people living in suburban areas that visit his bed and breakfast business. He said there is a bike path that goes right by their bed and breakfast so they have a lot of guests who are biking from Cincinnati to Cleveland. Participant 6 said that his guests ask about the corn and soybeans they see growing during the summertime, the empty fields in the winter, the grain bins around the corner, and where the corn goes after it is harvested. When asked if he enjoyed answering their questions, Participant 6 said he did because that is his background, and he sees it as an opportunity to explain to people what is going on in agriculture. Participant 12 said,

No, it’s enjoyable to answer their questions until it gets to be where they’re putting the whole world of agriculture down, and it’s like, ‘okay,’ then you’re kind of like … It just starts to get uncomfortable when they put down, constantly,
the part of your life that you—that is important to you—that you grew up with. And I try not to get into those conversations too much, or too deep into them if they don’t … Because I don’t want to give them wrong information, and you know, maintain, especially since we live someplace that we don’t know that many people. Just to maintain a relationship. But I just try to educate them as well as I can, and then let them form their opinions otherwise.

*Do They Feel Qualified to Answer Questions about Agriculture From Consumers?*

The majority of the study participants (seven of the 12, or 58.3%) said they felt qualified to answer agriculture questions. Participant 3 said that he was qualified because of his education, as well as his time speaking to the public. He said he understands what he is talking about because he is a farmer, and he understands the chemical labels and the chemistry of what he does on his farm.

Participant 6 said he felt qualified because of his background with teaching as a high school agriculture teacher for seven years, as well as his 24 years spent as an administrator for agriculture programs at a career center. He also said he tries to keep up-to-date on things in agriculture. While he doesn’t have as much direct contact with the newer chemicals that are being used now, he said he still feels very qualified since he usually receives more general agriculture questions.

Participant 10 said that she felt qualified to talk about agriculture because of her experience on her ranch and her grandpa’s farm. She said her education and real-life experience have been helpful, and another benefit has been having many friends involved
in agriculture from whom she can learn.

Participant 11 said he felt qualified to talk about agriculture. When asked why he felt qualified, he said, “I’m fortunate that I have a very broad background in all different avenues of life, and different occupations and that. So I understand a lot of that, people didn’t grow up broad-based like myself, or, not to say that they’re narrow-minded, but you know, that their interests sometimes are narrow-minded.”

Four of the 12 participants said they felt qualified depending on the subject matter. Participant 1 said that he was as qualified as anyone, adding he knows he isn’t an expert: “Most of my knowledge is really just on my own, things that I’ve become interested in, as opposed to anything from Ohio State.”

Participant 9 said he felt comfortable talking about agriculture on a small scale. “I operate from more an educational perspective, as opposed to a real life experience,” he said. “I didn’t grow up on a farm, but I took the classes, so I have knowledge, but not the personal experience.”

Participant 4 agreed, saying it depends on what the questions are. “If you’re asking me about water quality and manure, or wildlife habitat, and soil erosion, you bet. I’ve been doing it for 30 years.” He continued by saying if a person has generic questions about GMOs, he can decently be a part of the conversation. He said, “But if it’s green and grows in the ground or … we feed it out, then I’m pretty comfortable about those things.”

Participant 12 also said whether or not she feels qualified to talk about agriculture depends on the subject. She said she is certainly comfortable answering questions about
animals because that’s what she grew up with on her family’s farm. When topics such as crops and food supply comes up, she said she is comfortable to an extent, but she also feels like she needs to gather more information and teach herself more because she wants to make sure she shares accurate information. When asked if she had any specific examples of conversations, Participant 12 said she talked with another mother who thought her daughter was developing faster because of the “hormones in the milk that they drink.” Participant 12 said, “I just tried to reiterate that they’re not allowed to use these hormones in … our milk supply. And to read your labels because it says specifically on there: not treated with these hormones.”

*If Participants Believe it is Important to Talk to Consumers about Agriculture*

When the participants were asked whether or not it is important to talk to consumers about agriculture, 11 out of the 12 participants said *yes, it was important.* Only Participant 1 said no, but he added the caveat of “foods, I guess, but I don’t think about all the other things in agriculture that much.” Participant 2 said that it was absolutely important to talk with consumers about agriculture because it is central to culture, health, and commerce.

Participant 7 said he thinks it is an important discussion, especially about the concept of food deserts in inner city communities that can often be overlooked. He said,

The convenience stores are predominantly where people get a lot of their quick easy food, the bread, cereals, things of that nature. Fresh fruits are just typically not on the shelves. So I think there’s a big gap there. So I think it’s an important
discussion, healthy eating and all of that stuff.

Participant 9 said talking about agriculture is important because family farms are getting smaller and smaller. “It’s turning into big agriculture, the family farm and small farms going away,” he said. “Or if it isn’t, the people that work it have to have second jobs so it’s getting smaller because they don’t have time to work it because they can’t afford to have that be their primary mode of income.”

“I certainly do,” said Participant 10 when she was asked if it is important to talk to consumers about agriculture. She said,

If the general population doesn’t understand … the plight of the farmer and the rancher, then we’re going to be depending on the rest of the world for our food, and people just don’t get … Most cityfolk don’t get that. That’s as plain as I can say it. And if there isn’t some awareness brought to agricultural woes of this country, we’re in big trouble, as far as I’m concerned.

Participant 12 said she believed that it is important to talk to consumers about agriculture. She said it is important for people to know

What our farmers are doing is important for our food supply. And how … just the animals and how our food is processed in order for us to eat it, and helping educate people to go back to the way our grandparents used to prepare our food and go back to that. Preparing food on the dinner table in the evening needs to be more about the fresh foods and the foods you can get rather than all of the prepared stuff, with there being less and less farming happening, people doing
that, our food has taken, sort of a downturn, with all the processed foods.

“If we don’t have farming, if we don’t have livestock, who’s going to produce our food?” asked Participant 5. She said that there are some synthetic things made, but she feels comfortable talking about agriculture to people, and in her experience, people like to talk about it when “they feel that someone is interested in sharing the ideas of the farmer.”

Objective 3: To describe what individuals with agricultural backgrounds believe are the biggest obstacles farmers face as they try to engage with consumers.

Messages or Topics the Participants Believe Farmers or the Agricultural Community are Not Educating Consumers About

The major themes from the participants about topics that the agricultural community has not been educating people about were GMOs and general information about agriculture (See Table 6). Eight of the 12 participants (66.66%) brought up GMOs in their interviews. Participant 3 said,

When they [consumers] have an understanding of what it takes to produce a crop, there may be … a willingness to have an open mind about changes and new technologies like GMO. … If you understand the way it’s grown, you may not have to request or require something uniquely grown like organic. And so, I’m not saying that organic is bad, or the other is, is better. … If you understand the processes, and you understand health benefits, then you’re able to make a good decision on what you want. So, I mean, people have a right to purchase whatever
they like, but if they have good, sound information, then they may be able to save money and time on … the food they eat. Because it ultimately comes down to that.

Participant 4 talked about GMOs because he said it is front and center of a lot of people’s minds now. “… It’s not like we’re putting some weird chemical in an animal or a plant to come up with Roundup Ready plants or to come up with an animal that’s a little bit different,” he said, adding that people don’t understand GMOs because they think the science is so scary that they immediately are put off by it. He explained that it is either about removing or adding a gene that’s already been found in this plant. “And a lot of people, just with Roundup Ready stuff alone, don’t realize that that resistance came from the very species of plant that we’re talking about,” he said. “And sometimes that can make a difference in their attitude. Other times, I get the sense that it probably doesn’t.”

Participant 5 said that when people talk about GMOs, they don’t realize that they are ok. “There’s such a controversy between some of the people that really don’t understand what’s going on with that [GMOs], so I listen a lot and then I voice my opinion, how I feel about things,” she said. Participant one said he didn’t hear much about genetically modified products from farmers. “I hear about them [GMOs] from the hysterical, uh, tree-huggers and that sort of group. I don’t hear the agricultural side of that.”

Participant seven said there is an opportunity for farmers to talk more with consumers about genetically modified foods and crops, adding:
I think there’s a general perception amongst the general populous that there’s something wrong there because you’re genetically modified and the whole term genetically modified tends to scare people, because they don’t understand the context or the science behind it.

Participant 7 said it’s an opportunity for farmers to talk more about GMOs and why it’s a big deal, why it’s important, and inform consumers about some of the pros and cons of GMOs.

Participant 8 said she believes farmers are well informed about GMOs since they are dealing with the basics of them. She said she felt that farmers did not know how to inform consumers about GMOs, but she said consumers were definitely uneducated about the facts of GMOs, explaining that they are not bad because they produce more food for consumption. “I think some people view GMOs to be bad, and they view organic to be good, and they’re viewing … corn that has no pesticides on it to be better than corn that is being used with pesticides or something.”

Participant 4 added that GMOs had come up occasionally in conversation when he was talking with consumers, but he did not believe GMOs are received very well by the majority of the population if they don’t have an agriculture or a rural background. He said,

There are an awfully lot of people who are not agriculturally, uh, don’t have an understanding of production agriculture, or livestock agriculture, that are scared to death of GMOs. And, it takes an awful lot of effort to be able to, to even begin to
get them to understand the science and the biology and so forth that goes along with GMOs. … Most of the time …, I don’t feel successful with those kind of folks, that you’ve really accomplished a great deal. I think they’re just being respectful and not telling you you’re nuttier than fruitcake.

Participant 9 also said that he thinks a lot of people are afraid of GMOs. “I personally don’t understand why I advocate for them, at the international and national level, I mean, you can produce more corn to feed more people,” he said. “That’s what needs to be done, but that’s just personal opinion.”

Another emerging theme the participants said needed to be shared with consumers was general information about agriculture. Participant 6 said that while sometimes people see commercials from the Pork Producers Council or the Beef Council, there doesn’t seem to be a coordinated program to educate consumers about food production and where their food comes from. Participant 12 said that she thought farmers were trying their best to educate consumers, but they are too busy with their own day-to-day operations to really take the time to reach out to consumers. She said it is important to have someone sharing that message on behalf of farmers that they do treat their animals well and that they are processed appropriately.

Participant 4 said that while farmers have done a better job over the past few years about reaching out to the public, consumers still need to be informed about the cost of producing a crop, raising livestock, and the weather conditions they have to deal with at times. However, he said he was concerned that farmers do not take the time to know
how consumers, or non-agricultural people, think or what they know or don’t know because farmers are too busy milking cows, feeding hogs, or sitting in a combine, which he said could be to their detriment. He said,

I’m talking about you building a house on a 3-acre property down the road from my 500-acre farm, and that’s the first time you’ve been out in a rural area, and I come roaring down the road with a big old tank, spray tank, and don’t say nothing, don’t stop and introduce myself, don’t do anything. I’m just, unfold that dude and take off spraying, and you are scared spitless of what’s in that tank and what are you doing and so forth. And producers need to do more of that.

Participant 3 echoed the sentiment by saying that farmers need to be better neighbors and tell people about how they farm so their neighbors can be assured they will not be negatively affected. He said in many cases, a positive outcome is the result when farmers take the time to get to know their neighbors and share with them what they are doing
### Table 6. Messages About Which Farmers Need to Inform Consumers

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tr>
<td>Weather Conditions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hard to Acquire Business Loans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poison</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Water Rights</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
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**How Should Farmers Interact with or Talk to Consumers about Agriculture?**

When the participants were asked for their opinions on what would be a good way for farmers to interact with or talk with consumers about agriculture, the responses were somewhat mixed, but three major themes stood out. Major themes included interacting with consumers in **person**, using the **media**, and **social media or marketing**. The majority (58.33%) of the 12 participants stated it would be more effective for farmers to interact with consumers in **person**.

Participant 1 said his son, an organic farmer, goes to farmers markets, and many people come up to ask him questions **in person**. Participant 4 said he also thought the best methods would be **in person**, using small groups, whether they were at school or at church, even though it reaches a smaller cross-section of people. He said that in terms of
quality conversation and having the ability to allow people to follow up with questions, meeting in person through small groups in neighbors and communities would be the best way to reach out to consumers.

Some participants recommended that farmers go into grocery stores to talk with consumers. Participant seven recommended that farmers go into grocery stores, such as Whole Foods, Mariano’s, or Kroger, because it is a way to communicate with customers at point of sale. He said they could have tasting sessions and allow farmers to actually talk with consumers about their products. Participant 7 said then farmers could talk to consumers as they were purchasing products and could talk with them about the whole aspect of the science behind the farming, pesticides, what they use, and how they provide the types of products that consumers purchase. Participant four said having farmers going into grocery stores would probably not cut across a wide enough swatch of society to have an enormous impact, but he stated that anything face-to-face has a better chance of being successful and talking with consumers about how their food is grown.

Participant 8 said the different farmer talks or “farm to plate” series she heard about in Ohio were a great idea because they allow consumers to interact with products that come from the farm, such as pigs, beef, or chickens, as well as talk with the farmers in person. She said it becomes

A way that you can educate them with a product in front of you, in front of the consumer because consumers are not going to completely understand it in a fact of being, if it’s just shown on pictures or something, they’re not going to
understand it as well as if it’s something in front of them that they can taste, or they can see, touch. A lot of people learn by seeing and touching rather than just hearing.

Participant 5 said that it would be beneficial for farmers to attend either Extension or Ohio Farm Bureau Federation meetings because they would be an opportunity for them to share with their local community about what they do each day. “I think by getting more visible with the community, these farmers can share their thoughts and needs of the community,” she said. Participant 5 said that by speaking at local Kiwanis Clubs or Rotary Clubs is a great way to talk about agriculture to the greater public.

Participant 3 also recommended that farmers be involved in different organizations, such as Corn Growers or Pork Producers, where the organization speaks on a farmer’s behalf since a farmer’s time is limited. He said if someone doesn’t speak on behalf of the farmers, there will not be many farmers left.

Participant 9 encouraged farmers to keep it at the surface level when talking about agriculture with consumers. He said,

The second you go in-depth … you kind of lose them because they don’t have the baseline knowledge to really comprehend the conversation. You’ve got to build a base. So if you’re around the same people all the time … you have to start with the more simple things and work your way up.

Three participants said that the media was the best way to share information about agriculture. Participant 3 recommended documentaries to show what farmers are doing in
agriculture to bring their stories to the forefront. “We’re such a video-based society,” he said. Participant 3 also said that documentaries could show consumers specifically how farmers work to make food safe and put a face on the industry because so many people say today that all agriculture is corporate, like a factory. He said whether or not a hog came from a farm that raises 2,000 hogs or 100 hogs, farmers need to raise a healthy hog to produce a good quality piece of meat.

Participant 7 said it is important to reach the masses using *media* with this information so people will actually absorb some of the information. He recommended that farmers participate in TED (Technology, Entertainment, and Design) talks, where speakers talk on a subject for less than 18 minutes (TED, “Our organization,” n.d.) as a good way to reach out to people. He said TED talks are very big among the educated population in their 20s and 30s. “That forum would be something that would be openly accepted because TED talks are seen as a general kind of place where one really is able to get good … information from the experts inside any specific field.” He also said farmers could do media interviews to talk about agriculture and share what they do.

Participant 12 also recommended doing interviews with the media to get the most bang for a person’s buck. She said it would also reach a larger audience without having to take a ton of time away from the farmers’ busy, busy lives. Interviews and maybe some TV shows or something that’s a little bit more positive in that respect. That might be one way that that could happen.

Participant 6 also recommended reaching out to people using media, such as
newspapers, radio, and TV.

A third major theme that emerged was using social media and marketing. Participant 6 said that in today’s world, computers, technology, handheld devices, and Facebook should be good options to reach out to the people who live in the United States today. Participant 4 also mentioned that social media can be a good tool to inform more people about agriculture.

Participant 5 said that she is a Farm Bureau member, and they used marketing materials such as fliers as well as social media to inform people about opportunities to learn about agriculture. Participant 6 said that marketing is expensive, but using something like television advertising really is the best way to reach the masses.

Greatest Obstacle for Farmers Interacting with Consumers Who Are No Longer Connected to Agriculture

The major themes for this section were lack of education or ignorance, distance and lack of exposure to agriculture, and perception and culture.

The first theme was a lack of education or ignorance. Participant 10 said ignorance from consumers was the greatest obstacle facing farmers today, adding that not receiving education about agriculture was another obstacle. She said she asks children where their meat comes from, and they respond by saying the grocery store. She said,

It’s very disturbing to me that the American public has absolutely no idea what a farmer does, or what a rancher does, and where food comes from. We’ve gotten so accustomed to buying food or eating out that young kids today aren’t raised
with any kind of knowledge of what agriculture is.

Participant 11 said ignorance about agriculture exists in America, citing the logistics of urbanization, and he added that people who never grew up outside of the city, especially students, didn’t understand about agriculture. “People have no clue,” he said. “It’s just kind of dumbfounding to me that people don’t have an interest, don’t have a clue what happens and what goes on.” He said there are mini markets in up-and-coming areas where farmers try to educate people, adding that some of that was good, but in some ways it is bad because it does not look at the picture of agribusiness. “Someone’s growing carrots in their backyard, bring it to the curb market, well, yes, that’s going to feed a few people, but you also have to understand the dynamics of what it takes to feed billions of people,” said Participant 11.

Participant 4 said that two obstacles facing farmers today are the lack of knowledge on the consumers’ part and way too much independence on the farmer’s part. He said that some farmers see how important it is to get out and communicate with consumers, and they do an excellent job, but there are not enough farmers doing that. Participant 6 said farmers needed to be more outgoing and willing to talk to people about what they are doing, what their work schedules are like, and what they are accomplishing. He said that farming is not for everyone, but if farmers were more willing to put themselves out there and discuss things with consumers, he believed consumers would respect farmers more if they knew more about what farmers actually did.

Several participants mentioned their concern that consumers actually believed that
food comes from grocery stores. Participant 6 said people don’t realize that their food is grown locally or imported from other regions to supply grocery stores, and he said it’s important to keep people informed about where their food comes from. Participant 3 said that processed foods are frequently sold and consumed in our society, which he said leads to even more of a disconnection from agriculture. He gave the example of people not knowing how macaroni is grown because they do not realize that it’s pasta, which is made using wheat.

Participant 8 said that farmers are feeding more people now on less land than they did 100 years ago. “And that’s one thing that they [consumers] need to understand, and it’s [food] just not going to come up in the middle of a tree, off of a tree in the city, like they think it could,” she said. ” She said it concerns her that if youth are not taught about agriculture, then they will grow up without any understanding of how their food is grown or how it arrives at the grocery store. “They’re not going to be as informed and it’s better to educate them younger, the easier it’s going to be to have the youth educated and maybe move them up farther,” she added.

Participant 10 said students are not learning about the real needs of America in school, about growing crops and food because it is something that is not deemed important by society. Instead, students focus more on technology and finance. She said the interest in agriculture that once was in America is not there today.

When talking about people living in suburban or urban communities, Participant 9 said that they have no real sense of how things work in rural communities. He said one
funny example of a lack of understanding is that his mother-in-law believed “horses pooped out babies.”

Participant 2 said since he owns a creamery, he receives a constant source of questions, from what happens to the male calves that are born that they do not need, to how long can a cow be milked, to what is done with a cow after it doesn’t give milk anymore. “There’s nothing we won’t talk about,” he said.

Participant 10 said the majority of the population does not know how important water rights are for ranchers and farmers, explaining that water in the West is extremely regulated, which can be very difficult when farmers and ranchers are trying to grow crops. She said,

You don’t own your water. I mean, if it’s in a stream or a lake, you know, you can obviously have permits to build ponds, and then you have access to that water, but most of the water that is necessary either comes from a river or a stream that is coming through your land.

She also said that consumers have no idea how difficult it is for ranchers and farmers to acquire business loans. “Whether it be a combine or a tractor or baler, you know, you need that equipment,” she said. “And it’s extremely difficult for ranchers and farmers to acquire loans right now.”

The second theme was distance and lack of exposure to agriculture. Participant one, the retired oral surgeon, said that distance was the greatest obstacle facing farmers. He said these big farms are out in the middle of rural communities, away from people
living in urban areas, and no one wants to listen to organizations like a ConAgra because they believe that it is just big business talking. “And I’m more interested in the farmer’s story,” he said. “And that’s harder to get.” It should be noted that commodity associations have been working to share more of the stories of farmers during the last several years (E. Buck, personal communication, April 16, 2015).

Participant 3 said that the biggest obstacle is that the consumer doesn’t feel the need to interact with the farmer anymore, falling under the distance theme. “As long as that consumer can go to the grocery store and pick up the food that they need and know that it is safe, then what else do they need to worry about?” he asked. Participant 3 also said that, as a society, we are used to having seasonal fruits year-round, instead of only having strawberries and bananas during certain seasons. He continued by saying that farmers markets were nice opportunities for people to meet diversified farmers.

Participant 3 said that Meijer has tried to repair that disconnect by putting up pictures of the farmers who grew some of the lettuce that is sold in the produce section, and he thought more grocery stores should start making those kinds of connections because it puts a face with the product. “It shows that ‘Hey, there’s a person that grew this,’” said Participant 3. “It kind of comes back to this point of purchase: where is this product coming from?”

Participant 12 said that the lack of exposure to agriculture is a huge obstacle for farmers to connect with consumers. Referring to her own experience living in in a suburb near Atlanta, she said that people don’t see the farms since they are in urban areas. “It’s
kind of a disconnect from your suburban life and your urban life because they’re not exposed to it,” she said. For so many people, if they don’t see something like agriculture on a daily basis, said Participant 12, then they aren’t interested in it, which contributes to a disconnection between the two ways of life.

*Perception* and *culture* were the final set of themes that were mentioned by several participants. Participant 7 said that *perception* was one of the biggest obstacles faced by farmers when trying to interact with consumers. He said people living in Chicago typically think of farmers as people who are behind the times and out of touch because life in rural communities is so different from the urban population centers. “But in reality, that’s a farce,” said Participant 7, adding that farmers use technology to improve crop yields and have very technologically advanced equipment. He said the perception is just that people out in the rural communities don’t know what is going on in cities. Participant 2 said perception was the biggest obstacle for what he called “industrial agriculture” because he said they did not have the ability to be “open and honest and forthright.”

Participant 6 said the biggest obstacle for farmers is the *perception* that the general public does not respect them or that the public is not even interested in what they are doing. He said when he was growing up, some people struggled with an inferiority complex because they had a “Well, I couldn’t do anything else so I’ll just farm” attitude. Participant 6 said that today there is so much more education required for farmers compared to 30, 40, or 50 years ago. Participant 6 also said he once saw a bumper sticker
on the back of a farm truck that said, “Don’t criticize farmers with your mouth full.” He said it always rang a bell with him because people criticize farmers in the spring and the fall when they are moving their equipment on the roads to get to their different fields. Participant 6 said the soccer mom gets stuck behind a tractor and is frustrated because she’s late for the ball game, but he said that consumers still expect to go to the grocery and buy their groceries for a very small percentage of their income.

Participant 3 said consumers have the perception that agriculture is just a big conglomerate, which he said was untrue. He said,

It’s like, ‘Alright, you know, drive across agriculture and stop at a 2,000-acre farm. You’re going to see a mom and a dad and a son and a wife and kids.’ Those aren’t corporate farms. They may be incorporated, for tax reasons, but those aren’t corporate farms.

Participant 9 said the greatest obstacle for farmers interacting with consumers was culture because rural life and urban life are extremely different. “Everything from how you plan your day to what’s available at the grocery stores. I mean, it’s a totally different atmosphere,” he said. “Totally different pace of life as well.”

**Summary**

By using open coding to review responses from these 12 participants, several interesting major themes emerged from the data. The themes were coded according to each question.

For the first objective, three of the five participants who grew up on farms said
they had considered moving back to their rural community to farm. Seven of the 12 participants who participated in the study currently live in a rural community. Even though some of the participants did not return to their own family farms, a majority of the participants still decided to live in a rural area. Three of the 12 participants were farmers or ranchers. The largest theme was a lack of jobs or a lack of opportunities from the rural communities enticing students to move back after graduating from college. Another major theme was that the family farm may not be large enough to support multiple families, forcing the recent graduate to look for work elsewhere or try to start his or her own farm.

The second objective was to examine the messages that participants share with consumers they interact with in urban and suburban areas. When participants were asked whether or not they talked about agriculture regularly with the people and consumers they interacted with on a regular basis at work or during the week, many of the participants said they did. When the participants were asked what types of conversations typically came up with consumers when they were talking about agriculture, the themes were food, organic foods, and food safety. When the participants were asked about whether or not they initiated conversations with consumers about agriculture, five of the participants said no. Four of the participants said that they essentially talked about agriculture with people who grew up in rural, urban, and suburban areas. Additionally, when the participants were asked if they received questions from consumers about agriculture, seven out of the 12 participants said that they did not receive questions from...
consumers about agriculture. The majority of the participants (seven of the 12) said that they felt qualified to answer questions about agriculture. Eleven of the 12 participants said that they believed it was important to talk to consumers about agriculture.

The third objective consisted of describing what individuals with agricultural backgrounds believed are the biggest obstacles farmers face as they try to engage with consumers. When the participants were asked what farmers needed to educate people about, they said GMOs and sharing information about agriculture in general. When the participants were asked what would be a good way for farmers to interact with or talk with consumers about agriculture, the responses were somewhat mixed, but several indicated that it was better for farmers to interact with consumers in person. Other recommendations included doing interviews with media and then sharing information using social media and marketing.

When participants were asked what they perceived as the greatest obstacle for farmers interacting with consumers who are no longer connected to agriculture, the major themes for this section were lack of education or ignorance, distance and lack of exposure to agriculture, and perception and culture.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Food is incredibly important in our society today, and it is crucial for humans to consume food so they have energy and their bodies can function properly. More than ever, with consumers now being two or more generations removed from the farm, there is a greater disconnect between people living in urban and rural communities.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to learn why alumni who grew up on a farm decided to leave, what they believe keeps people from living in rural communities, and what messages they are sharing with consumers from urban areas. If alumni are talking about agriculture, it would be beneficial to know what is being said: whether or not they speak positively, negatively, or indifferently about agriculture and food to the consumers they interact with on a daily basis. This information could better help 4-H clubs, FFA organizations, agricultural education, OSU Extension, and other groups learn how to better talk to the individuals around them about agriculture. This study was grounded in ideas from the self presentation theory, cognitive dissonance theory, and the schema theory.
Research Objectives

This study strived to meet the following research objectives below:

1. To examine the reasoning behind individuals’ decision on whether or not they decided to return to the farm after college.

2. To examine the messages that individuals share with consumers they interact with in urban and suburban areas.

3. To describe what individuals with agricultural backgrounds believe are the biggest obstacles farmers face as they try to engage with consumers.

This study collected data from 12 qualitative telephone interviews, with eight male participants and four female participants. One hundred alumni from The Ohio State University College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES) were contacted via email, and out of those 100 alumni contacted, 12 alumni responded and agreed to participate. Interviews were conducted over the phone at the convenience of the participants. The data collected from these interviews were analyzed using open coding.

This fifth chapter will summarize the findings found within this study, the implications for future research, and the possible implications for agricultural communicators.

Objective 1: To examine the reasoning behind individuals’ decision on whether or not they decided to return to the farm after college.

The participants in this study who grew up on a farm or in a rural community were asked whether or not they decided to return to the same farm or rural community where they grew up. Eleven of the 12 alumni grew up in Ohio, although only five of them
still live in the state. Of the other seven participants, two live in Colorado, two live in Illinois, one lives in Pennsylvania, one lives in New Hampshire, and one lives in Georgia. Of all 12 participants, only one returned to his rural community and lives two miles from where he grew up. When the four other participants who grew up on a farm were asked why they did not return to the farm, the majority of them said that jobs and a career kept them from returning to the farm, which aligns with research which states that job opportunities in rural communities are not as prevalent or lucrative as they are in urban communities (Kellogg Foundation, 2002; Bell, Jarnagin, Peter, & Bauer, 2004).

Of special note is that seven of the 12 participants who participated in the study currently live in a rural community. Even though some of the participants did not move back to their own family farms, a majority of the participants still decided to live in a rural area. Additionally, a few of the participants did not grow up in a rural community but chose to live in one during their adulthood. This means that while some of these participants did not necessarily want to farm, they still desired the lifestyle that rural communities offer. Even though some of the participants did not have the calling or opportunity to farm on their own, they still wanted to experience living in the country for their children, possibly so their kids could have the same kind of experiences they enjoyed growing up. This supports the finding by Glaze, Edgar, Rutherford, and Rhoades-Buck (2013) that college students who came from an agricultural background would prefer to go back to a rural area after graduating.

Once again, jobs and a lack of opportunities were heard frequently when
participants were asked why other people who grew up on farms did not move back to the farm after they graduated from college. Additionally, one participant said that his family’s farm was not enough large enough, or profitable enough, to support his brother and him so the participant went in another direction for his career. This reason emerged more often in the interviews than the researcher anticipated. The sizes of the farms the study participants grew up on were mixed, ranging from 17 to 650 acres, meaning they would not have been considered “large” farms.

Three of the 12 participants were farmers and ranchers. Two of the participants ended up teaching agricultural education at the high school level, with one eventually becoming an administrator over agriculture programs. These findings show that since three out of the 12 participants became farmers and ranchers, while some of the other participants also worked in the agricultural field, there is an opportunity to encourage more students at the high school level to participate in agricultural education programs. Getting more students involved in these kind of programs at a younger age may inspire them to consider working in an agricultural field when they grow up, even if choose not to pursue farming.

**Objective 2: To examine the messages that participants share with consumers they interact with in urban and suburban areas.**

The majority of the participants said they talk about agriculture regularly with consumers and enjoy it. When the participants were asked what types of conversations they had about agriculture with consumers, they said topics included *food, organic foods,*
and food safety. Since all people need to consume food to survive, it is understandable that consumers want to talk about the food they are eating. There did appear to be some hesitancy from the participants on talking about certain aspects of agriculture with consumers, depending on the subject matter and how qualified the participant felt about the subject that came up in conversation. Seven out of the 12 participants in this study said that they felt qualified to answer questions about agriculture. Additionally, another four of the 12 participants said they felt qualified depending on the subject matter. This relates back to the schema theory because the participants that felt qualified had either personal knowledge or experience with agriculture, meaning they were able to talk about their experiences with the consumers around them because most participants had either the educational knowledge or hands-on experience.

Some of the participants explained that it is easier to talk about agriculture with people who grew up in rural areas because that is their background, making it less stressful compared to people who grew up in suburban or urban areas and had little to no interaction with agriculture. In line with the cognitive dissonance theory, most of the participants said they did talk about agriculture, with some of them saying it was difficult when other consumers talked about the more controversial topics, like GMOs, and they experienced cognitive dissonance because they wanted to inform them more about that topic but were not entirely confident in explaining the details of GMOs.

Additionally, the majority of the participants in this study were aware of the obstacles facing agriculture today and most wanted to speak well of agriculture since the
majority of people who grew up with agriculture said they had extremely positive experiences. Participant 3 said he initiates conversations about agriculture to have “uplifting and positive conversation” about it, which also lines up with the self presentation theory used for this study. The participants also stated that whenever they talked with consumers, they wanted to be honest in their answers. However, since there is a disconnect between the rural and urban communities, certain things that happen on a farm can sound very harsh or strange to people who did not grow up with that lifestyle. For example, if a person grew up showing 4-H animals that will go to market after the fair, it is easier to understand that animals are raised to be eaten. However, to a person who did not have that experience growing up, it can sound extreme and negative to raise an animal through 4-H and then have it slaughtered afterward for human consumption—that death is part of the picture of life on the farm. That is part of why the self presentation theory can be difficult—and yet participants in this study clearly stated the importance of talking with consumers honestly about agriculture. It can sound overly harsh if people did not grow up knowing that animals were raised for humans to eat, and it can be a struggle when people with an agricultural background talk to consumers who did not grow up on a farm because they want the people to hear about the good things going on in agriculture.

The cognitive dissonance theory was also seen in their responses. For example, Participant 12 said, “It just starts to get uncomfortable when they put down, constantly, the part of your life that you—that is important to you—that you grew up with.”
just one example of the feelings of tension some alumni expressed as they talked about trying to inform the consumers around them about agriculture, which they said could sometimes feel like a losing battle since there is a lot of misinformation available to consumers.

Objective 3: To describe what individuals with agricultural backgrounds believe are the biggest obstacles farmers face as they try to engage with consumers.

One of the biggest obstacles for farmers is that the population today is the least connected to agriculture it has ever been. Participants said that farmers face consumers’ lack of education or ignorance, distance and lack of exposure to agriculture, and perception and culture. When people live in an urban or suburban area, every amenity they could ever want or need is nearby, meaning that people may not be interested in leaving the city as often to learn more about agriculture and how people live in rural communities. Additionally, people living in urban communities typically make more money than people living in rural areas. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor (2013), using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey in 2011, urban households earned $15,779 (32%) more than rural households in the United States. Having a higher household income means that families in urban areas may be able to more easily afford paying higher prices for “local” or “organic” food while people in rural communities may not have that opportunity. Additionally, farmers may not see the need to pay extra for “local” or “organic” food if they are already comfortable with the strict food safety standards in the United States since they work in the industry.
When asked what messages or topics the participants believed farmers or the agricultural community were not educating people about, participants mentioned that GMOs and general information about agriculture were topics that needed to be talked about more frequently. Eight of the 12 participants brought up GMOs during their interviews, showing that it is a topic of the minds of many consumers today. One reason this may have come up during the interviews is because of the recent push in Congress to label GMOs (Whoriskey, 2015) as well as major companies, such as Chipotle Mexican Grill becoming “GMO free.”

One obstacle that was clear from this study is just how large the divide is between people living in urban and suburban areas compared to rural communities. The lifestyles are so different that it can be hard for people to relate to others who grew up with a different background. It can be difficult for farmers or people who grew up on a farm to describe the love of agriculture to people who have never experienced it. The love of being outside, the realization that working long hours is a part of the lifestyle, and the privilege it is to grow food can be difficult to explain, but this is a great opportunity for CFAES graduates who have left the farm to share their experiences with the consumers they meet. People living in urban or suburban areas may be disappointed that it rained over the weekend, while farmers may be happy that it rained because their crops were looking dry. People who may not be connected to the farm may see something as a minor inconvenience, but weather can make or break a farmer’s yields. But to succeed in agriculture will mean staying involved in legislation and working with consumers to find
out what they hope to receive from their food.

Another obstacle for farmers is that they can feel criticized by a society that is no longer connected to what they do, and, as Participant 6 quoted from a bumper sticker, “Don’t criticize farmers with your mouth full” seems appropriate because farmers work extremely hard to raise food that is priced decently for consumers and also allows the farmers to support their own families.

Limitations

The sample of this study was limited by the number of The Ohio State University CFAES undergraduates who responded to the study. Although the sample was smaller than the researcher originally anticipated, 12 people out of the 100 alumni contacted in the study responded to participate and be interviewed over the phone. This study offers rich data to be used, but it cannot be generalized outside of the sample that participated in this study. At the conclusion of the 12 interviews, the researcher reached data saturation. The time constraint and limited feedback from alumni were some other limitations for this study, as well as only focusing on Ohio State alumni. The alumni from Ohio State were chosen due to time constraints and because the researcher had access to contact information for that specific demographic. The researcher recommends that the results from this study be used to make a survey that could be distributed to a much larger audience to glean information, preferably in several different states.

Researcher bias was something the researcher actively worked to curb during this study. The researcher grew up on a farm in Ohio, left the farm to move to a larger city,
and now works for an organization that does have some overlap with agriculture. While the researcher was not an alumni of The Ohio State University, she was around the same age as approximately one of the interview participants, while the majority of the participants were in their 30s or older.

One limitation with this study is that there was most likely a self selection bias from the participants who participated. If alumni did not talk about agriculture with consumers, then they most likely did not reach out to the researcher to participate, which may have affected the results. Additionally, seven of the 12 participates (58.33%) also went to graduate school so there is most likely a bias there since they may understand how difficult it can be to find participants for thesis research. Another limitation was how frequently different agricultural issues had been in the news, with GMO labeling legislation being a hot topic, which may have accounted for the reasoning behind why so many of the participants mentioned GMOs as something about which farmers needed to inform consumers. After the interviews had been conducted, Chipotle Mexican Grill announced they were no longer using GMO products so there have been several agricultural issues being discussed by the media. Lastly, doing research with interviews allows a great opportunity to hear directly from a person about his or her experiences. A downfall is that this form of research may be biased by the self presentation theory. Since these alumni cared enough about agriculture to participate in the study, there may have been a bias because they wanted to present agriculture well to the researcher.
Implications for Researchers

Since food and agriculture is Ohio’s No. 1 industry, it is important to continue doing research on this critical subject. With the continuing urbanization in the state and nation, there is a growing disconnect between the rural and urban communities, creating confusion and a distrust of “industrial agriculture”—even though a majority of people do not understand that what they believe are “factory farms” are still farms run by families.

Many Americans today keep pushing for the local food movement (Participant 1 said that his son is an organic farmer and told him that it’s nice if food is organic, but “it’s probably better if it’s local”). Organic food is also becoming more popular in America because consumers believe they are consuming healthier food. Since the United States is essentially at least two generations removed from the farm, people are at the point where they want to feel more connected to agriculture and where their food comes from, which can open up a conversation between the producers, consumers, and people with a history or background with agriculture like the CFAES alumni.

One benefit from this study is that it does open doors to new opportunities for research. With this increase in interest with food and food production, there may be an opportunity to research what land-grant universities like The Ohio State University are doing to educate their students on talking about challenges facing agriculture today with consumers. Other research topics include how best to reach out to consumers about informing them about agriculture when less than 2% of the U.S. population lives on a farm. It would also be beneficial to use the results from this study to make a survey for a
larger audience to gain more data. Surveys could also be emailed to more people to allow for sample selection so that another researcher could select people who specifically grew up on a farm and moved to an urban area, instead of interviewing people who did not grow up on a farm. Additionally, after talking with Participant 12, the researcher believes it would be interesting to do research on why stay-at-home mothers believe there is more reason to be concerned about food safety, potentially compared to people. Since five of the research participants were in their 60s, it would also be interesting for another researcher to focus on what young working professionals in their 20s are saying to consumers about agriculture to see if there is a difference in responses before the two age groups.

Implications for Practitioners

One finding from this study was that the people who left agriculture had very positive experiences with it. They didn’t move away because they did not enjoy being involved in agriculture, but either a lack of jobs, not enough room for them to join their family’s current operation, or simply a desire to excel at something different led them away from agriculture. It was interesting to learn that while the vast majority (11 out of 12) study participants did not return to the community where they grew up, seven of the 12 participants still live in a rural community.

While most of the participants went to Ohio State in the 1970s, they did not receive extensive training on how to talk with consumers about agriculture. While the education requirements and classes certainly continue to improve and adapt with the
changing needs of the students at Ohio State, any additional opportunities to help teach students how to talk more easily about agriculture with their peers would be beneficial, not only for the students, but for Ohio agriculture as a whole. As the leaders and change agents of the future, these Ohio State CFAES alumni have an amazing opportunity to use their degree and inform people about their own experiences with agriculture and growing up in a rural community. For practitioners, farmers, agricultural educators, and other people who are passionate about agriculture, it is important to teach the consumers around them about agriculture, as well as train up the next generation to talk with consumers. Agriculture will continue to grow and change, and it is critical for farmers to communicate about what they do, and why they do it.

Talking about the growing divide between the rural and urban populations is not easy—it can actually be very uncomfortable. However, there are several ways to help this specific demographic that was interviewed feel more at ease about talking to consumers about agriculture. One of the biggest examples involves using the Extension agents available in Ohio’s 88 counties. The agriculture Extension agents could offer special classes on a monthly basis to the general public where they could lecture about hot topics in agriculture so consumers could hear accurate information. The Extension offices in regions could also combine forces and host regional meetings at larger venues to inform more people.

Extension offices could also be encouraged to continue partnering with groups such as Farm Safety For Just Kids that offer different safety days and opportunities for
students to learn about how to be safe on the farm. Something similar should be offered for students in the urban communities as well, but maybe instead of focusing on farm safety, which may not be as applicable for them, it would be beneficial to take students from urban and suburban communities on field trips to see different farms. This would allow students the chance to get up close and personal with agriculture: petting cattle, lambs, or sheep; learning how a farmer plants crops; taking rides on a combine; teaching them how to grow a garden; and hearing about the different job opportunities available for them in the agricultural field.

It would also be beneficial for The Ohio State University’s CFAES to host a special weekend once or twice a year for an “alumni summit” so alumni could attend meetings about current trends and issues in agriculture. This would be a great opportunity to welcome alumni back to campus to improve alumni relations, allow for greater networking possibilities with other alumni, and give alumni the chance to learn how other alumni are using their education from Ohio State. It would also be useful to host special workshops on informing alumni on how to talk about agriculture with the consumers around them. The organizers should also live stream and record the lectures so that alumni who live across the nation and world would be updated on the information being shared. Instead of just giving them the information, after the workshops, there should be role-playing opportunities to let alumni partner into groups and practice telling one another what they do in agriculture or work on explaining different hot topics in agriculture as though they were talking to a consumer at the grocery store. Near the end
of the conference, they could even go on the campus and talk to students walking around about different trends or issues in agriculture and have conversations with them. Other good workshops would include training on using social media to inform consumers about agriculture, transitioning family farms to the next generation, and the pros and cons of returning to the family farm, with interviews from people who returned and others who did not to hear their perspective about their decisions.

One of the most interesting results from the Hess and Trexler (2011) study was that the authors said their participants do seem to understand that their food comes from farms, but they do not understand the specific details to help them fill in the blanks about what the authors call the “agri-food system,” and this, in turn, can engender misconceptions that could hurt the students from acquiring new schema (Hess and Trexler, 2011, p. 160). The authors also stated that the education field follows the constructivist theory, but it has been ignored by the agricultural education community, which the authors said should change.

There are several ways to reach out to students at a young age, and using something like agritainment, also known as agritourism, would be a beneficial way to reach out to students in urban communities and add new schema so they understand what happens on a farm by visiting a farm for a school field trip to learn what happens on a farm. Chase (2008) defined agritourism as a commercial enterprise on a real working farm that allows visitors to enjoy and become educated about the workings of the farm, while also providing additional income for the farm. Although people who live in urban
or suburban areas do not farm, that does not mean they are not interested in food or livestock production. Indeed, they may be even more drawn to the romantic nostalgia of agriculture since they may no longer have family ties or connections to farmers or agriculture. While agriculture is critical for food production throughout the United States and especially Ohio, there is still the dichotomy that 75% of Americans live in urban areas (Bell et al., 2004, p. 241). It is crucial for people living in urban populations to remain connected to agriculture and see firsthand how farmers in America are passionate about feeding the world safely and cost-effectively.

Not only could agritainment or agritourism help inform students about agriculture, but it is also a great way to interact with the urban and suburban communities. Opening up more farms to the public for agritainment purposes would allow farmers to have more conversations with their consumers, answer any questions they have, and hear what they are wanting from their food. This would also allow people who grew up on a farm learn how to have these conversations as they move through their lives and are faced with such opportunities. Agritainment would also give farmers the chance to share why they run their farming operation a certain way and show the visitors how they treat their livestock. Putting a face, a name, and a place about farming is important for people in urban and suburban communities as well. This allows them to have an accurate and updated image of what a farmer looks like—instead of an outdated image of Old McDonald.
Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides a view of how people who have graduated from a college of agriculture talk about agriculture with the consumers around them. While some of these participants talk about agriculture more than others, for the majority, there was a desire to talk to consumers about agriculture, even if they only engaged with the people around them. Some of the participants did not feel comfortable talking about agriculture with consumers who were not connected to agriculture because the conversations may have been uncomfortable due to their differing beliefs. While there is much more to be learned from this group of people who grew up on a farm but left for different reasons, this study was another step to learn more about how these CFAES alumni talk about agriculture even if they decided not to return to work on their own family’s farm or their careers took them in an entirely new direction.

Food and agriculture is Ohio’s No. 1 industry, and it remains critically important for the consumers and farmers who raise the food people eat. While agriculture will continue to evolve and grow, it is hoped that farmers can better reach out and inform consumers about what they do and why they do it, which could potentially help avoid unrealistic new standards that may negatively affect farming practices and food prices. However, farmers should also listen to consumers and hear their wants and concerns as they continue to grow food for their local communities, state, nation, and world.
List of References


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Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval Document

Protocol Title: Interviews with Producers
Protocol Number: 2015E0075
Principal Investigator: Emily Buck
Determination: The Office of Responsible Research Practices has determined the above referenced project exempt from IRB review.
Date of Determination: 02/11/2015
Qualifying Category: 2

Dear Investigators,

Please note the following about the above determination:

- Retain a copy of this correspondence for your records.
- Only the Ohio State staff and students named on the application are approved as Ohio State investigators and/or key personnel for this study.
- No changes may be made to exempt research (e.g., personnel, recruitment procedures, advertisements, instruments, etc.). If changes are needed, a new application for exemption must be submitted for review and approval prior to implementing the changes.
- Records relating to the research (including signed consent forms) must be retained and available for audit for at least 5 years after the study is closed. For more information, see university policies, Institutional Data and Research Data.
- It is the responsibility of the investigators to promptly report events that may represent unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

This determination is issued under The Ohio State University’s OHRP Federalwide Assurance #00006378. Human research protection program policies, procedures, and guidance can be found on the ORRP website.

Please feel free to contact the Office of Responsible Research Practices with any questions or concerns.

Thank you,
Ellen Patricia, MS, CIP
Program Director
HRPP Quality Improvement
Office of Research Office of Responsible Research Practices
317 Research Administration Building, 1960 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210
614-688-5556 Office / 614-688-0366 Fax
patricia.1@osu.edu www.orrp.osu.edu
Appendix B: Introductory Email Sent to Alumni

Subject Line: Graduate Study Invitation about Talking to Consumers about Agriculture

Hello!

My name is Stephanie Leis, and I’m a master’s student at Ohio State, majoring in agricultural communications. For my thesis, I am interviewing people who have graduated from the OSU College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences about their experiences with talking to people about agriculture.

If you agree to participate, I would greatly appreciate the chance to interview you over the phone, at your convenience. For those who are willing to participate, your name will be put in a drawing to receive a $50 Texas Roadhouse gift card, a $50 Outlook gift card, or a $50 Olive Garden gift card. Each person whose name is drawn will receive one of the three gift cards.

The recorded interview will only take between 30 minutes and an hour of your time. You are under no obligation to participate. However, if you agree to participate, please respond to this email as soon as possible so we can set up a time to do the interview over the phone. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your time and your professional contributions,

Stephanie Leis
Graduate Student, College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences
The Ohio State University
Columbus, OH 43210
USA
Email: leis.35@buckeyemail.osu.edu
The faculty supervisor for this research project is:

Dr. Emily Buck  
College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences  
The Ohio State University  
Columbus, OH 43210  
USA  
Email: buck.210@osu.edu

For questions about your rights as someone taking part in this study, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251. You may call this number to discuss concerns or complaints about the study with someone who is not part of the research team.
Appendix C: Second Email Sent to Alumni

Subject Line: Graduate Study Invitation about Talking to Consumers about Agriculture

Hello!

My name is Stephanie Leis, and I’m a master’s student at Ohio State, majoring in agricultural communications. I wanted to send out a reminder email to invite you to participate in my study for my master’s thesis. I will be interviewing people who have graduated from the OSU College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences about their experiences with talking to people about agriculture.

I will need to complete the interviews soon so please let me know if you will be able to participate. Everyone who participates will be entered into a drawing to receive a $50 Texas Roadhouse gift card, a $50 Outback gift card, or a $50 Olive Garden gift card. Each person whose name is drawn will receive one of the three gift cards.

The recorded interview will only take between 30 minutes and an hour of your time. You are under no obligation to participate. However, if you agree to participate, please respond to this email as soon as possible so we can set up a time to do the interview over the phone.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,

Stephanie Leis
Graduate Student, College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences
The Ohio State University
Columbus, OH 43210
USA
Email: leis.35@buckeyemail.osu.edu
The faculty supervisor for this research project is:

Dr. Emily Buck  
College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences  
The Ohio State University  
Columbus, OH 43210  
USA  
Email: buck.210@osu.edu

For questions about your rights as someone taking part in this study, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251. You may call this number to discuss concerns or complaints about the study with someone who is not part of the research team.
Appendix D: Third Email Sent to Alumni

**Subject Line:** Final Invitation to Participate in Graduate Study on Talking to Consumers about Agriculture

Hello!

My name is Stephanie Leis, and I’m a master’s student at Ohio State, majoring in agricultural communications. This is a final reminder to invite you to participate in a master’s thesis study where I will interview people who have graduated from the OSU College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences about their experiences with talking to people about agriculture.

I will need to complete the interviews promptly so please let me know if you will be able to participate. Everyone will participate will be entered into a drawing to receive a $50 Texas Roadhouse gift card, a $50 Outback gift card, or a $50 Olive Garden gift card. Each person whose name is drawn will receive one of the three gift cards.

I would greatly appreciate hearing about how you talk about agriculture to the people you interact with on a daily basis. Again, this interview will only take between 30 minutes to an hour of your time.

Thank you for your time and your interest,

Stephanie Leis  
Graduate Student, College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences  
The Ohio State University  
Columbus, OH 43210  
USA  
Email: leis.35@buckeyemail.osu.edu
The faculty supervisor for this research project is:

Dr. Emily Buck  
College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences  
The Ohio State University  
Columbus, OH 43210  
USA  
Email: buck.210@osu.edu

For questions about your rights as someone taking part in this study, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251. You may call this number to discuss concerns or complaints about the study with someone who is not part of the research team.
Subject Line: Last Request to Participate in Graduate Study on Talking to Consumers about Agriculture

Hello!

My name is Stephanie Leis, and I’m a master’s student at Ohio State, majoring in agricultural communications. I wanted to send out one last email to invite you to participate in my study for my master’s thesis. I will be interviewing people who have graduated from the OSU College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences about their experiences with talking to people about agriculture.

I am very close to meeting my interview requirement for my study and only need interviews from a few more people. Everyone who participates in an interview will be entered into a drawing to receive a $50 Texas Roadhouse gift card, a $50 Outback gift card, or a $50 Olive Garden gift card. Each person whose name is drawn will receive one of the three gift cards.

The recorded interview has only been taking approximately 30 minutes. You are under no obligation to participate. However, if you agree to participate, please respond to this email as soon as possible so we can set up a time to do the interview over the phone.

Thank you for helping a fellow Buckeye!

Stephanie Leis
Graduate Student, College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences
The Ohio State University
Columbus, OH 43210
USA
Email: leis.35@buckeyemail.osu.edu
The faculty supervisor for this research project is:
Dr. Emily Buck
College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences
The Ohio State University
Columbus, OH 43210
USA
Email: buck.210@osu.edu

For questions about your rights as someone taking part in this study, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251. You may call this number to discuss concerns or complaints about the study with someone who is not part of the research team.
Appendix F: Verbal Script for Obtaining Informed Consent and Interview Questions

Hello, my name is Stephanie Leis. I am a graduate student at The Ohio State University in the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES), and I am in the United States in Ohio undertaking research that will be used in my thesis.

I am studying people who have graduated from Ohio State’s College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and whether or not they talk about agriculture with the consumers around them. According to Bloome (1992), the percentage of people living on farms in the U.S. declined from a total of 30% in 1914 to less than two percent, which means there is a greater disconnect between consumers and farmers than ever before.

I would like to ask you a series of questions about your background and whether or not you grew up with any experiences in agriculture. I will also be asking you questions about how you talk to consumers about agriculture and whether or not you see that as important today. Everyone needs to eat, which means we still need food, which means we still need people to grow and raise food. In addition to asking you some demographic questions, I will also be asking you questions about whether or not you talk with the consumers you regularly interact with about agriculture.

The information you share with me will be benefit people because we can learn more about what people share with the consumers around them. This interview will take between 30 to 60 minutes of your time.

There is no risk of a breach of confidentiality. I will not link your name to anything you say, either in the transcript of this interview or in the text of my thesis or any other publications.

There are no other expected risks of participation.

Participation is voluntary. If you decide not to participate, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can, of course, decline to answer any question, as well as to stop participating at any time, without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
If you have any additional questions concerning this research or your participation in it, please feel free to contact me, my thesis supervisor or our university research office at any time. Their contact information was listed at the bottom of the email I sent you.

I would like to make a tape recording of our discussion, so that I can have an accurate record of the information that you provide to me. I will transcribe that recording by hand, and will keep the transcripts confidential and securely in my possession. I will erase the tape after I transcribe it.

There is an opportunity for interview participants to receive incentives. Everyone who participates in an interview with me will be entered into a drawing to receive a $50 Texas Roadhouse gift card, a $50 Outback gift card, or a $50 Olive Garden gift card. Three people will be randomly selected to receive one of the three gift cards. If you start the interview and stop halfway through, you will still be entered into the drawing for one of the three gift cards. The winners will be notified by Wednesday, April 22, 2015. By law, payments to subjects are considered taxable income.

Do you have any questions about this research? Do you agree to participate, and may I record our discussion?

If so, let’s begin…. 
Appendix G: Thesis Interview Questions

First, I wanted to ask you some demographics questions.
- What is your occupation/job title?
- Where do you live?
- Describe where you live now. Do you live in a house, an apartment, a condo, or a farmhouse? What is the setting?
- How old are you?
- What was your major and minor in during college at Ohio State?
- What year did you graduate from Ohio State?
- Did you return to Ohio State for graduate work? If so, what did you major in and when did you graduate?

Thank you, now we will move into main questions for the thesis.

1. To begin, where did you grow up?

2. Did you have any connection to agriculture growing up?
   a. If yes, how so?

3. If you grew up in a rural community, did you live on a grain farm or a farm where livestock were raised?
   a. If you answered yes to either of those questions, can you share some details about your upbringing, such as how many acres your family’s farm consisted of, and what they raised specifically?

4. What were the occupations of your parents?

5. If you grew up on a farm, after graduating from Ohio State, did you end up returning to the rural community where you grew up, or did you move somewhere else?
   a. If you did not return to that same community, where did you move?
   b. Was that new location in a rural community?
6. If you grew up on a farm, did you ever think of returning to work on the farm you grew up on or by starting your own farm?
   a. If you did move away after graduating, what kept you from returning to that rural community?
   b. Would you ever consider returning to that rural community, and if so, what would make you return?

7. What do you think is the main reason students do not move back to a rural community after graduating from a college like Ohio State?
   a. Can you give me some examples?

8. While you were a student at Ohio State, did your classes teach you about how to talk to consumers about agriculture?
   a. If yes, what did you learn?
   b. If yes, have you found that knowledge helpful as an adult?
   c. If no, what did you wish they had taught you about talking to consumers about agriculture?

9. Is your current job in the agriculture field?
   a. If yes, can you explain what your connection to agriculture is in your job?
   b. What does a typical day look like for you?

10. If you grew up with some experiences in agriculture, would you describe them as positive or negative, and why would you describe them that way?
    a. Can you give me any more specific examples?

11. Do you talk about agriculture with the people and consumers you interact with on a regular basis at work or with people you see during the week?
    a. If yes, how often do these conversations occur with consumers?

12. If you talk about agriculture with consumers, what types of subjects related to agriculture typically come up in conversation?
    a. Can you give me any more examples?

13. If you talk with consumers about agriculture, do you usually initiate these conversations?
    a. If yes, why do you choose to initiate them?
    b. If you do initiate these conversations, are people usually pretty receptive to talking about agriculture?
    c. If you do not initiate these conversations, is there a reason why you don’t talk to consumers about agriculture?
14. Do you talk about agriculture with people who mostly grew up in rural or urban areas?  
   a. Do you tend to talk about agriculture with one group (either people from rural, suburban or urban communities) more than another?  
   b. If you do talk about agriculture, how receptive is each group about talking about agriculture?

15. Do consumers ask you questions about agriculture?  
   a. If yes, what kinds of questions do they ask?  
   b. Can you give me some examples?  
   c. How do you respond when they ask you questions? Do you enjoy answering their questions, or does it feel more like a chore? Can you give me any examples?

16. Do you feel qualified to answer questions about agriculture from the consumers around you?  
   a. Why or why not?  
   b. Can you share specific examples of conversations that have occurred with you and consumers?

17. Do you believe it is important to talk to consumers about agriculture?  
   a. If so, why do you think it is important?  
   b. Can you give me any more examples of conversations you have had with consumers that lead you to believe whether or not talking about agriculture is important?

18. Are there any messages or topics that you believe that farmers or the agricultural community are not educating consumers about?  
   a. If yes, can you share what messages or topics about which they need to educate or dialogue with consumers?  
   b. If no, why do you say that? Can you give examples of how they excel at dialoguing with consumers?

19. In your opinion, what would be a good way for farmers to interact with or talk with consumers about agriculture?  
   a. Can you share specific examples?

20. Do you have any recommendations on how farmers could reach out to people who are not directly connected to agriculture?

21. What do you believe is the greatest obstacle for farmers interacting with consumers who are no longer directly connected to agriculture?

22. Is there anything I didn’t ask about that you wanted to add to this conversation?  
   a. Can you share any specific examples?

Thank you so very much for your time.
Transcript of Interview with Participant 1 on Wednesday, February 18, 2015, at 3 p.m. I already read him the verbal script.

I: NAME, we will go ahead and get started. It’s Wednesday at 3:06, and I want to be cognizant of your time. We have 20 or so questions that we need to go through.

So, to start off, where did you grow up?

P: Uh, Stamford, Connecticut.

I: Oh, fantastic. Did you have any connection to agriculture growing up?

P: No. Uh, my father was a textile engineer, and he worked with wool.

I: Oh, he worked with, what? [Had trouble hearing him.]

P: Wool.

I: Oh, wool, very cool. Sure. So the next question was, if you grew up in a rural community, did you grow up on a grain farm where livestock was raised?

P: No.

I: Ok. What were the occupations of your parents?

P: My father was a textile engineer, and my mother was a bookkeeper.

I: Oh, very good. Ok, and J---, some of these won’t apply to you since you didn’t grow up on a farm, which is totally fine, so I will skip some of these. Because the next one was, if you grew up on a farm and you graduated from Ohio State, did you end up returning to the same rural community where you grew up or did you move somewhere else. So J---, did you end up going back to Connecticut?
P: No.

I: Ok. Um … And then the next one is if you grew up on a farm, did you ever think of returning to work on the farm you grew up, or by starting your own farm …

P: No.

I: And then … NAME, while you were a student at Ohio State, did your classes teach you to talk to consumers about agriculture at all?

P: I don’t think so. I certainly don’t remember.

I: Sure. … If no, what do you wish they had taught you about talking to consumers about agriculture. Did you wish they had taught you anything in particular?

P: Nooo, I was really animal nutrition. I wish a chem major at my previous university.

I: Oh.

P: When I transferred, so I wouldn’t lose a year, I went into animal science because I was hoping to get into med school.

I: Oh. Very interesting. Is your current job in an agricultural field?

P: No.

I: So the next question is, if you grew up with some experiences in agriculture, would you describe them as positive or negative?

P: Not applicable.

I: Ok, no, that’s fine. And some of these won’t be, which is totally fine. Do you talk about agriculture with the people and consumers you interact with on a regular basis at work, or with people you see during the week?

P: We talk about foods and stuff like that. I have a son that’s actually an organic farmer.

I: Oh, very neat.

P: So I talk with him about that.

I: Sure. If you do talk about agriculture with consumers, what type of subjects related to
agriculture typically come up in conversation?

P: More about organic produce than anything else, I’d say.

I: Sure. Anything in particular? About organic produce?

P: Pardon me?

I: Anything in particular about organic produce?

P: No, just uh, one of the things my son sort of taught me is, from his standpoint, it’s nice that it’s organic, but it’s probably better that it’s local.

I: Mmh, ok. Very interesting. When you do talk about agriculture, do you talk about it with people who mostly grew up in rural or urban areas?

P: Mmh, I’d say urban to suburban.

I: No, that’s very good. And NAME, this does apply to you, since your son is an organic farmer, do consumers ask you questions about agriculture, like the people you run into by a day-by-day basis?

P: No.

I: No. Um, do you feel qualified to answer questions about agriculture from the consumers around you?

P: As much as anyone, I don’t think I’m an expert, that’s for sure.

I: Oh yeah. Well, one of the probes to that is why or why?

P: Uh, most of my knowledge is really just on my own, things that I’ve become interested in, as opposed to anything from Ohio State.

I: Mm-hmm, sure. Do you believe it’s important to talk to consumers about agriculture?

P: Ummm, no. Foods, I guess, but I don’t think about all the other things in agriculture that much.

I: Mm-hmm. Ok, the next question, are there any messages or topics that you believe that farmers or the agricultural community are not educating consumers about?
P: I couldn’t, that are not ethically?

I: No, I’m sorry, are there any messages or topics that you believe farmers or the agricultural community are not educating consumers about?

P: Hmm. About the only thing I don’t hear much about is the genetically modified products. I don’t, I don’t, I hear about them from the hysterical, uh, tree-huggers and that sort of group. I don’t hear the agricultural side of that, uh, thing.

I: Mm-hmm. Ok. So that would be probably be one area where you think they could do better educating or dialoguing with consumers?

P: Yes.

I: NAME, in your opinion, what would be a good way for farmers to interact with or talk with consumers about agriculture?

P: Umm. It’d have to be more on the association level. I know my son does it when people ask him questions at farmers market, but for most people, it’d have to be more of a marketing effort, I’d say. So things would get in newspapers and magazines.

I: And then, do you have any other specific examples?

P: Again, more, that’s probably the biggest thing I hear from friends talk about, is, you know, genetically modified products.

I: Ok. Ok, NAME, and then the next question, what do you believe is the greatest obstacle for farmers interacting with consumers who are no longer directly connected to agriculture?

P: Distance [laughs]. I mean, you know, you’ve got these big farms, and they are out in the middle of places, and you know, and, no one really wants to listen to them, you know, a ConAgra, or somebody like that, because they figure that’s just big business talking. Uh, and I’m more interested in the farmer’s story. And that’s harder to get.

I: Ok. NAME, while we’ve been talking, is there anything I didn’t ask about that you wanted to add to this conversation?

P: No, I told you about my son, so, that’s about it.

I: Ok. And actually, uh, yea, I actually may want to come back and talk to you about that. NAME, just to kind of pull this together, I just wanted to ask you some kind of
demographic questions, if I could. How old are you?

P: 65.

I: Ok. And what was your major and major in during college at Ohio State?

P: Uh, animal nutrition was my major, and my minor was biophysics.

I: Oh wow. And then what year did you graduate?

P: ’71.

I: Very good. Did you return to Ohio State for graduate work?

P: No, I went elsewhere.

I: And NAME, if you could tell me where you live now, like a house, suburb, farm, neighborhood?

P: In a house.

I: Ok. Is it in like a suburb, or?

P: Uh, yea, we’re suburban here. It’s a commuting town to Boston, even though I’m in New Hampshire.

I: Oh wow, actually NAME, that’s another thing. So you live in New Hampshire?

P: Yes.

I: Very neat. If I can ask, and this is kind of deviating from my script, but how did your son get into organic farming?

P: Um …

I: And I guess did you move?

P: He too transferred after two years from a liberal arts college to the New College of California, where he majored in sustainable structures and he was living on a CSA, and uh, part of the deal was he was building some structures with the guy, and the guy was teaching him how to take care of equipment and about you know, farming. And then, uh, he, after he graduated, he went back to where his, now, where his wife was from, which
was Colorado, but it was so cold that they really couldn’t grow anything so they left there and went to New Mexico, and, after sort of bopping around for a few years, he found a, uh, apple and peach orchard, that he now runs.

I: Wow. Is that in New Mexico?

P: Yes.

I: Very neat. And NAME, I’m sorry, I may have missed this from the beginning—where did you grow up?

P: Uh, basically, I grew up in Stamford, Connecticut.

I: Oh, ok. NAME, thank you so much for your time. I really do appreciate you taking the time to do this, um, just short survey with me.

P: No problem.

I: Yeah, I really appreciate it. You were definitely my first one, so thank you for your patience.

P: Oh, you did great.

I: Oh, thanks!
Transcript of Interview with Participant 2 on Thursday, February 19, 2015, at 8 a.m. I already read him the verbal script.

I: Ok, NAME, I’m now recording. Thank you so much for doing this. It is now 8:17 on Thursday morning. So, NAME, I just wanted to start off by asking you some demographic questions. First of all, what is your occupation or job title?

P: Well, I’m the co-owner with my wife of NAME Creamery in LOCATION, Ohio, so I uh, so I uh, I operate a creamery.

I: Oh, great, how long have you been doing that?

P: This is our eighth year.

I: Eighth year, great. Um, so NAME, describe where you—do you live in as well?

P: Well, we live, we live in LOCATION. NAME Creamery is the creamery, but our home is actually LOCATION, which is a spot on the road between Albany and Darwin on 681. I moved here in 1994 and coming back after leaving Ohio immediately upon my graduation from Ohio State University in 1974, I got the last dairy technology degree that was given by Ohio State.

I: Oh, you’re kidding? I didn’t know they stopped giving those.

P: Oh yeah. It changed to food science and nutrition. My little brother, NAME, who went through five years after me, got a food science nutrition degree basically from the same curriculum and professors. And BROTHER is the president of NAME Sour Cream.

I: Oh, wait, that’s your brother?

P: Yeah, that’s my brother.

I: And what was his name?

P: BROTHER.

I: Oh, I had no idea.

P: So they’re building a $50 million plant in LOCATION right now.

I: Oh my gosh, wow.
P: So my father went to Ohio State University. He got a dairy tech degree in 1953 as somebody coming back and he was in the Pacific, and uh, he came back and went to Ohio State and got a dairy tech degree in when he was in his, what would he have been? Young thirties, early thirties, on the GI Bill.

I: Wow.

P: So my father, NAME, was in OSU Dairy Tech, 1953, and we grew up on Olentangy River Road, south of 161. Walt Slatter, the OSU judging coach, lived around the corner on 161… Judging is a big deal in dairy. You’re taught to organileptically evaluate, and judge by tasting dairy products. It’s a Dairy Tech required course, and you compete to be members of the team, which then goes to a national conference. There each team competes on their ability to judge the full gamut of dairy products, by putting them in your mouth. My father was high individual on the national championship team in ’52 and went on to be involved in that contest for over 20 years. He and a guy named Dr. Henry Randolph, who got his Ph.D. at Ohio State, were considered the two finest dairy tasters in America. My father was around the Dairy Tech department, and there was faculty in and out of our home, and it was kind of like, our home was an annex of the Dairy Technology department. So, I grew up knowing dairy tech students, grad students, and professors. Dr. Jim Harper just passed last year. He taught into his 90’s, and was one of my father’s professors and then my brother Vincent’s and my favorite professor. We both credit Dr. Harper with setting us on our course. I remember seeing Jim at a California dairy conference in early 1980. I was no outstanding student, having diverse interests, plus working a full-time job most of college. I remember him talking to me after I had been out of school for what, probably seven or eight years, and him saying, “I never thought you’d be this successful” [laughs].

P: I remember just laughing because, cause, you know, I was no stand-out student, but I had the good fortune to go directly out of Ohio State to be hired by Dale Seiberling, also a professor of Bert’s. Both these men were younger than Bert. Dale Seiberling, who funded the Seiberling Chair, lives over in Granville, and you’re not old enough to know that Seiberling was one of the big tire names in Akron.

I: Um.

P: Dale’s father sold milk machines and worked in the dairy industry. Dale came to Ohio State and invented the sanitary air-operated valve, the CIP cleaning spray ball, and learned how to fly an airplane so he could run up to Wisconsin on the weekends to work on his ideas there. Dale ended up leaving academia and going into business. He hired me out of college while he was heading a division for Ecolab in Beloit, Wisconsin. I worked for him for two and a half years, and then went to work at Safeway stores. At the time,
they were the world’s largest milk bottling company. The man who hired me as a helper was a 1957 Ohio State University dairy tech grad, Bob Kaufman. I still visit Bob in California a couple times a year. I describe Bob as having a mind like Sherlock Holmes. Ira Gould was the guy who ran the Dairy Tech department at Ohio State and really made it into what it was. Ira told Bob late in his life that he was the best student Ira ever had.

I: Aw.

P: So I, I was very fortunate between Jim Harper, Dale Seilberling, and Bob Kaufman, um, I had, out, I had extraordinary teachers who were not just um, powerful professionals, powerful intellects, but also all of them, very much committed to uh developing you know, people’s capabilities and minds, and uh, part of a, part of a long chain of uh, of uh, whatever you want to call it, commitment to professional development and uh, and uh, that that uh, that’s the Ohio State University Dairy Technology Department. So how about that for a story, Stephanie?

I: No, I think that’s great. That’s a great way to get started.

P: Well, it’s all true, I’m not making this stuff up you know. So it’s uh, it’s in that context, I’m just very, very glad to be back and able to, and my brother too, we both are just thrilled to see Ohio State, you know, the food science, leaning back more in the direction of dairy and, and having a focus on making the dairy professionals the dairy industry needs these days. So it’s uh, it’s interesting to see this whole thing come full circle. It’d be fun to live to see a dairy tech degree re-established at Ohio State, not that that’s some goal in itself. Not that I care, it doesn’t matter, it doesn’t matter what the curriculum’s called. What’s important is that it really prepares people to go out in the industry and serve industry and, and become leaders in the industry. The Ohio State University’s dairy technology department created the leaders of the American dairy industry. They were graduates of the 1950s and uh, they went everywhere. Kroger, SafeWay, they are all over the country, there’s no question Ohio State University’s dairy tech department in the 1950s uh fostered the leadership of the American dairy industry. So, some, uh, you know, these things aren’t understood. You know, I’m, I’m, I’m, uh, there aren’t a lot of people that really have it in context, you know. But, I’m, I’m fortunate to have been able to do that. You know, because … just … getting, getting, growing up in it. Everybody in the American dairy industry knew my father because they all met him when they were seniors in dairy technology at the judging contest. And then he went on to be, uh, on the board of directors at the dairy and food suppliers association, which was the dairy lobby that proceeded IDFA, the current dairy lobby.

I: Oh, ok.

P: And then I was taught the history of the dairy industry at the elbow of any number of
people. That’s how I got to, I basically go to meet and get to know just about everybody, over the years.

I: Oh, it sounds like it. What a great opportunity.

P: And BROTHER and I have been the technical go-to people for USDA FDA in Washington, D.C., on dairy matters since the 1980s. So we were both young Turks. He was at Laprino, I was at SafeWay, we were spending billions, like tens of millions, a year. We were doing, both, he and I, probably, each of us, were doing more, putting in more processing systems and furthering, developing the concepts of, of higher capacity and higher efficiency, uh, dairy processing. Vince and I were probably the two strongest people in the nation, probably spent, spent as much money as any two people in the nation, doing that kind of work.

I: Wow.

P: It’s fun now. You know, I’m in my mid-60s, and he’s pushing it, pushing 60, and uh, so anyway [laughs]. I’m sorry, but I thought, I just think, I thought you’d be interested as being a, you know, as a Buckeye, and as a whatever. Agriculture is Ohio’s biggest business, and it’s America’s biggest business, uh, uh, at least, in times of peace. It uh, uh, it’s, it’s, uh, it’s the dairy. Dairy, is the biggest single segment of all of agriculture. And people, it’s aleeping giant. People aren’t even aware I had a, my first brother-in-law was a G14. He was a highest level of computer software purchasing at the Pentagon, you know. And he used to laugh when I’d talk about the military industrial complex and the power of the military, he’d say, “Dairy’s the, dairy’s the biggest, strongest lobby in all of Washington, D.C.” This is back in the 80s. And it’s still true.

P: Dairy drives everything in American agriculture, but it does it very quietly behind the scenes, and it manages to maintain its low profile, uh, eh, which is kind of shocking in relation to the volumes of money they, the size of the business, the size of the transactions, and uh, you know, the whole situation. Dairy’s a, dairy is a unique, an entirely unique part of America’s food industry, agriculture production and food industry [laughs]. So, so, Stephanie, all these, it’s gonna be, it’s uh, this is the perspective I bring to the questions you’re going to be asking me about agriculture.

I: Oh sure.

P: How bout that. Go ahead.

I: O yeah. And NAME, some of these may be repetitive since you’ve mentioned a few of them …
P: It’s ok.
I: … But we’ll just keep going. Um, so NAME, how old are you?

P: I’m 63.

I: And what was your major and minor in during college at Ohio State?

P: I just had one major and it was dairy technology.

I: Ok. And when did you graduate? What year?

P: ’74.

I: ’74. Um, did you go back to Ohio State for graduate work?

P: No.

I: Ok, um, and we kind of already touched on this, NAME, but my first question is, to begin, where did you grow up?

P: Worthington, Ohio. I was born at OSU University Hospital in 1951. My father, when my father was a student.

I: Oh very good.

P: Oh sure, sure. I’m about as Buckeye as you can get for somebody that left the state for a quarter of a century.

I: No, that’s great. Um, so, and again, did you have any connection to agriculture growing up?

P: My father was in the dairy industry, but not on the cow side. He was on the processing production side … So I had, yeah, I would, I had a, I joke that I never got to just consume dairy products, I always had to taste ‘em and sample ‘em and judge ‘em.

I: Wow.

P: So yeah, I, in terms, not on a, we lived in a somewhat rural situation. We always had a big garden, lots of canning and freezing. We’d go over to somebody’s … We’d go over to somebody’s, uh, farm, shoot a cow in the head, and cut it up and take half of it home, and I raised chickens in the backyard and I knew how to sucker tomatoes by the time I was 8-years-old.
I: Oh wait …

P: Sort of had a, sort of had a foot in both worlds, but not growing up on an active, commercial farm of any sort.

I: And I’m so sorry, but what did you say about the tomatoes?

P: Say about what?

I: What did you say about the tomatoes? Did you say …

P: Oh! I knew how to sucker tomatoes when I was 8-years-old.

I: Oh, ok.

P: That’s tying up the tomatoes on a pole, and snapping off the parts that, you know, growing tomatoes, there’s lots of different ways to do it, but the old, basic way is to have a tomato stake, and you actually break off about half of the branches that grow out of the tomato. You just have to break off the right ones. And they tie ‘em with uh, uh, torn off pieces of old bedsheets, for the pole as they grow higher. So, uh, a growing season of tomatoes, you’re constantly tying and suckering tomatoes. The suckering is a snapping off of the branches you don’t want.

I: Oh sure. Oh, thank you, I just wanted to make sure I heard you right.

P: There was a, there was a, there was a Hereford beef farm right around our house where we grew up, kind of wrapped around the whole house, and so, there were cows around, and you know, I was used to walking through cow slop out in the neighbor’s fields. And uh, um, but again, I wasn’t, I didn’t grow up on an active working farm.

I: Sure.

P: So probably, probably a pretty, pretty, pretty uh, interesting crossover of not being in those kind of places but having friends, kids that were. Uh, there was a, there was a large working farm at the corner of Olentangy River Road and 161 that probably owned a thousand acres of land, planted corn all along the Olentangy River that’s now 315. And uh, so I could walk half a mile and, uh, be in the midst of a bunch of huge, big old barns and every animal under the sun.

I: Oh wow.
P: So that, you don’t, you don’t think of Worthington that way but uh, but uh, in the early mid 1960s, corner of, the corner of, uh, of uh, 161 and Olentangy River was Warner’s farm, and it was huge.

I: And did you say Warner’s farm?

P: Yeah. It’s the name I remember, Warner. How bout that?

I: No, that’s great.

P: So we all grew up, you know, 60 years ago, we all grew up with a lot closer connection to agriculture than people would typically have now.

I: Right, in the Worthington area, sure.

P: Yeah, yeah.

I: Well, my next question, NAME, is, if you grew up in a rural community, did you live on a grain farm or a farm where livestock was raised?

P: No.

I: Ok. And then, 4, we kind of touched on this a little bit, what were the occupations of your parents?

P: My father was a dairy technologist, and my mother was a housekeeper.

I: Oh, very good. No. 5, so if you grew up on a farm after graduating from Ohio State, did you end up returning to the rural community where you grew up or did you move somewhere else?

P: Yeah, I uh, I went somewhere else.

I: Ok. If you didn’t return to that same community, where did you move?

P: Oh, I moved to Wisconsin and then pretty promptly to California.

I: How long were you in California?

P: Basically 20 years.

I: Ok. Um, and then No. 6, NAME, did you ever think of returning to work on the farm
you grew up on or by starting your own farm?
P: Yeah, but I didn’t grow up on a farm.

I: Ok. I guess, what encouraged you to move back to a rural setting?

P: Ah, that’s a good, that’s a good question. I uh, I wanted to uh, I wanted my children to
know their grandparents. And uh, and uh, I was uh, uh, uh, I was, at the time I was living
in Long Beach. I was in Los Angeles, and it’s just dreadfully expensive to, uh, to live
there, and uh, I wanted, I wanted to raise my children in a more rural setting.

I: Mm-hm.

P: So uh, we decided to move back to Ohio.

I: What year was that?

P: … Close to my parents, and uh, and then we ended up moving down here to Meigs
County when we moved here.

I: Ok. Um, well, and actually, this, um, does really pertain to you, NAME, because you
lived in a bigger area, like Long Beach, and then you came back to Ohio in Meigs
County. Um, what do you think is the main reason students do not move back to a rural
community after graduating, like from a college like Ohio State?

P: Well, I uh, I uh, yeah. So, um, you know, I think, I think that the course of American
agriculture in the last 30, 40 years has, has decimated those communities because of the
economic model that’s involved. And I think that the, that the focus on, uh, high volume,
low-margin, uh, low-value commodities is ultimately an economically extractive model
of agriculture in business. And so I think that what’s happened that the, that the, uh,
vibrant rural communities that were based on a cycling of money within the community
have been changed into something very, very different, in which agricultural
commodities, basically corn and soybeans, are raised in large scale and they leave the
state, you know. So, it’s uh, it doesn’t provide an economic engine like we used to have
in this country where you would be, your agricultural community would be growing
chickens and eggs and the actual food that you eat, and, and, all the infrastructure and all
the, again, the economic recycling and circulating of money that’s involved when, when
rural communities are practically self-sufficient, with regard to their food, their own food,
and with regard to the infrastructure and the aspects of agriculture. For instance, you
know, our dairy farmers uh, uh, got all their grain from Kalmbach in Toledo. You know.
That’s what they did. Well, now we’re buying corn and soybeans locally, and the
problem is we don’t have a grain mill, you know. So, rather than have a big huge multi-
state regional, you know, grain outfit like Kalmbach, there used to be a grain elevator in,
you know, in different areas.

P: I mean, you know, like there was one in Athens and there was one in McArthur, 30 miles away. And so, you wouldn’t, you wouldn’t pay somebody to drive a tractor-trailer with 60 ton of grain, or not 60, let me think, 60,000 pounds of grain from Toledo, you see? It would come, it would come from the grain mill in Athens. So that grain mill in Athens had employees, and they drove trucks, and there was a local truck maintenance shop that would maintain their trucks, you see. So once all the grain started coming from Kalmbach, the local mill closed, the local diesel truck shop closed, you see?

I: Right.

P: Does that make sense?

I: It does.

P: So that’s why there’s nothing to come home to. Because there’s no economy there. The rural communities are bankrupted. I was a road warrior in my career. I traveled almost constantly, all over, all over the country. And, you know, I watched the process happen.

I: Like on the road.

P: How bout that, how bout that for an answer, huh?

I: No that’s good, yeah. Writing this all down. Ok …

P: Yeah, yup.

I: NAME, I’ll move on to my next question.

P: Sure.

I: While you were a student at Ohio State, did your classes teach you about how to talk to consumers about agriculture?

P: It was not an issue, no.

I: Ok. Um, if no, what did you wish they had, did you wish they had taught you anything about talking to consumers about agriculture?

P: No it wasn’t an issue. It’s funny, it’s funny to, it’s funny to say that. It’s interesting, to think about it, you were asking the question. These were not the issues we had.
I: Mm-hm. Ok … [Getting ready to move on to the next question.]

P: Our problems in agriculture were solving the problems. They weren’t PR problems.

I: Do you want to, expound on that a little bit?

P: Oh, I sure could, yeah. Yeah.

I: Yeah, go ahead, if you want to.

P: We were committed, we were committed, we were committed to making food as if you were making it for your own children, for your own family. And the ethos of the food community, or I should … Let me just speak to dairy, because that’s what I know, and that’s what I was raised in, that’s my perspective. That’s my lens for all of this. It’s real simple. We felt duty-bound to make the healthiest, finest food products we could. That was our job, and that was the context in which we were raised and in which we went to college, and that was the way the dairy industry saw itself. We were taught that the milk came perfect from the cow, and it was our job to screw it up as little as we could and get it right to consumers. And we believed fervently in the importance of milk as a highly nutritious food for our children in particular. And, and, it was like a mission. It was not, it was not just a commercial enterprise. We were considered to have the responsibility to provide this very important and you know, even sacred, food to our communities, honest to God. You know, Stephanie, I’d, I mean, it’s very, it’s very, it’s very difficult for me to communicate to people of your generation how different the world was 50 years ago. Because it was profoundly different.

P: I mean, this isn’t what we really hear about today. And that’s why, and that’s why agriculture has a PR problem. If they were still following the ethos of my father’s generation, there wouldn’t be a PR problem.

I: Ok, NAME, let me, find my next question, ok … If you grew up with, and since you did, like experiences with agriculture, would you describe those as positive or negative and why would you describe them that way.

P: Oh, absolutely positive. Absolutely positive. You know, you know, food was one of our greatest pleasures. I grew up in a rural situation where I didn’t have a lot of neighbors, I couldn’t run down to the drugstore and buy a soda, or a milkshake. You know, when my father would show up and open the trunk of his car and have a bushel of fresh peaches or pears, or apples or something, it was a special occasion. And we, we made our own ice cream by hand cranking it, and uh, food was something you shared around a table and you prayed over it. And, and, uh, you didn’t bolt your food. And the
whole, you know. Americans spend more time eating food in their car than they do sitting down at a table so food occupied a very different place in our lives. And it was, uh, it was sensual, it was satisfying, it was all kinds of things, but there was, there was really nothing to compare it with the role of food. We didn’t own a television. And uh, you know, what else was there, you know?

I: Right.

P: Honest to gosh. And we didn’t have a lot of food, you know. We, we, we would have meat on Sunday, and you know, you’d make bean soup with the ham bone for Monday or Tuesday, but there were five kids in the family and when we had chicken, my father would eat the heart and the gizzard and the liver because all the many other pieces went to the kids.

I: Aw.

P: It wasn’t like we were poor …

I: Right.

P: But I think it’s, I think it’s uh, again, it’s hard for people of your generation to understand the context, um. Food was the proportion of people’s disposable income that it was, and, and uh, you know, I remember, it was some big deal. I was maybe 12 or 14, when my father brought home steaks for my birthday dinner.

I: Oh.

P: It was the first time I’d ever had a steak in my life.

I: The first time ever?

P: Yeah.

I: Wow.

P: So, you know, it’s uh, and again, it wasn’t that we were poor.

I: Sure.

P: My father worked a full-time job. My parents were saving enough money that the children could all go to college. Um, uh … And you know, you went to the grocery store and, and uh, you were buying. You weren’t buying all this funny processed food.
were buying food. And uh, uh, and food didn’t get thrown away. There was no food thrown away in our house. There wasn’t food sitting, spoiling in the refrigerator. You didn’t, you didn’t fill up a giant shopping cart and take it home and put it in the refrigerator and forgot half the stuff you bought, you know. Food was … In my house, food was sacred. And respected. There was no food wasted. So very, very different, very, very different food world. So food was a big deal! You relished it. And you didn’t eat snacks, either. You weren’t always having, you know, some bottle of sugar water in your hand or some bar you were peeling and eating in the middle of the day. You know, we ate three meals a day. There was a cookie jar, and it wasn’t always full, and even when it was, you, sometimes, you, you couldn’t, you weren’t allowed to touch it, you know.

31:51 P: Food was, food was eaten three times a day, and you got your meal, and my mother was the best baker I ever knew. We had fresh baked hot bread. She’d get up on a Saturday morning and deep-fry doughnuts for us, handmade doughnuts, and we’d powder them if we wanted to in paper bags, with powdered sugar. Food was, food was a central thing. But very, very different from what it is now.

I: Um, NAME, my next question, um, do you talk about agriculture with the people and consumers you interact with on a regular basis at work …

P [interrupts]: Constantly. Every single day. You could say it’s half of what I do.

I: Because, actually, that’s my probe. If yes, how often do these conversations occur with consumers.

P: Oh, for me, you know, I’ve got a business card that says ‘Dairy Evangelist.’ This is my life--this is what I do.

I: Wow.

P: I’m, I’m, and you know, we have a slogan that came from our first marketing director, “We don’t market—we inform.” And I think it’s a real important idea, you know. I think that the, that the effort, uh, by industrial agriculture is, you know, that’s creating the survey here, it’s part of an effort on the part of industrial agriculture, to educate consumers. Well, what they mean is, to sway consumers to their perspective. And that’s very different from informing people. If you inform someone, you’re trying to give them information to let them make an informed choice. And this is the fundamental principle of American democracy. But if you’re educating people, then this is you’re trying to tell them how to think and what the answers are, that’s Chairman Mao.

I: So basically you talk to consumers multiple times a day then?
P: Yes, I do.

I: Informing them about what you do?

P: Absolutely. You can go on our website, if you pulled up emails and saw what’s going on. Interacting with consumers, listening, and answering questions and informing. It’s very, very much central to what NAME Creamery is about, and I am NAME Creamery.

I: Right So NAME, so what type of subjects typically come up when you’re talking with consumers?

P: It’s interesting because, because they run the wide gamut, you know?

I: Uh-hm.

P: Dairy products are the most complex, naturally occurring food on the planet, probably even not naturally occurring. And so, there’s so much involved in dairy, from what goes on on the farm, to how the milk is processed, to how it’s distributed, what are our values, where do we fit in the community. It’s wide-ranging, it’s deep and it’s wide. And very much buried.

I: Can you give me an example of a recent one [conversation] that kind of stuck with you?

P: Oh golly. Lots of them. You know, it starts with how the cows are treated, you know, and what their environment is and what, how they live. And uh, uhh, it’s a constant source of questions, and it really quickly gets, gets peeled down into layers of, ‘Well, what happens to the male calves that are born that you don’t need? And how long do you milk a cow? And what do you do with a cow after it doesn’t give milk anymore?’ And, and, uh, uh, uh, you know, there’s, there’s all kinds of issues regarding the cows. And then on the farm, you know, there’s ‘How sustainable is the farm? What is the environmental consequences of the operation? Uh. Is the, is the land being handled in a way that actually develops more fertile land, more soil, and what is it, is it, is it, is the agriculture on the dairy farm being done in a way that is extractive? Is actually depleting the land’ you know.

I: Mm-hm.

P: The commonly accepted estimate is that we lose 44 pounds of topsoil in Iowa for every bushel of corn that’s produced. A bushel of corn weighs 56 pounds. And that’s, you see, so this is, this is how I want to inform people, but I don’t think it’s how the Farm Bureau wants to educate people.
I: Ok.

P: I don’t think Farm Bureau wants to talk about losing 44 pounds of topsoil, for every 56 pounds of corn it raises, do they???

I: I had never heard that stat, so no that’s ….

P: [interrupts] And you won’t hear it from the Farm Bureau. But you can go to the right people at USDA,

I: M-hm.

P: …You can go to land-grant university projects that have been funded to investigate these things.

I: M-hm.

P: This is where, this is where, again, the purpose, the purpose of industrial agriculture and, and discovering their PR campaign is, is, uh, to help people to accept the model of industrial agriculture, but there’s a whole lot that those, that, that industrial agriculture does not want to explain or talk about. And here at NAME Creamery, we’re open kimono.

I: Mm-hm.

P: There’s nothing we won’t talk about. And we won’t parse our answers …

I: Mm-hm.

P: And we won’t, we won’t spin things. We’ll tell you straight. We’ll be square.

I: Mm-hm.

P: We’ll be forthright. And I think this is the, this is the real weakness and problem for industrial agriculture. Because there’s whole areas that they need to spin, that they need to hide. That’s why they need PR. And in some ways, that’s why PR isn’t the answer— the answer is a different agriculture.

I: And NAME, my next question, since you do talk to consumers about agriculture all the time, I think that’s great …. 
P: Uh-huh.

I: So, well, I’m not sure how this fits, but, are they, so they are usually pretty receptive then? Like how long do your conversations typically last?

P: Oh, they can last a long time. And, and, uh, I think the reason, well, I think one of the reasons they do, is because customers are so hungry, they’re so hungry for honest, open engagement about the issues of agriculture.

I: Mm-hm.

P: They’re hungry for it. They want to know. They know how important it is, where their food comes from, how it’s made, and how the food industry fits into the larger whole of American commerce.

I: Mm-hm.

P: And, and of their own children’s future. You know, we’re, we’re raising the sickest generation of children in American history right now. And it, clearly is a product of our food systems. People want answers. People want solutions.

I: Mm-hm.

P: People want change. And unfortunately, industrial agriculture, unfortunately for, I don’t mean unfortunate, I shouldn’t put a judgment or a value on it, but industrial agriculture is caught because they’ve declared that they found a way, 30 years ago, to feed the world. And 30 years later, they are still saying, you know, this is the way. And, and, the fact is, that life has changed. And industrial agriculture was one of the most dramatic changes in the course of human history. It was uh, it was absolute turn into the weeds, into a completely new paradigm, completely new world. And to think that we made that sharp turn, and everything was perfect, is a ridiculous idea. Life is change. Our agriculture needs to be on a course of constant change.

I: Mm-hm.

P: The fact that it’s basically stuck pounding the paradigms of 30 years ago, um. Our understanding of food, our understanding of human health, all of these things have changed dramatically in 30 years. What hasn’t changed is the approach, the strategy, the methods of industrial agriculture. From that standpoint, all you have to do is be a student of history, and know that there’s a train wreck coming.

I: Um, so, and I guess, NAME, since you’ve been on that, would you recommend a
solution, then?

P: Oh, sure. I think it’s easy to see. And I think it’s: let the free market act. Let consumers have the food they want. Made the way they want it made. It’s that simple. Isn’t that shocking?

I: Um … [Trying to move to the next question.]

P: Because industrial agriculture is a bully. It’s a big bully. And there’s no excusing not having GMO labeling. There’s no excusing not having country of origin. Whenever you have people telling you that you don’t need to know, or you can’t make a choice, and to leave it to the experts—this is not democracy. Something’s being hidden, and I’ll … You know, democracy is a messy, ugly, chaotic, difficult thing. I’ll take it over anybody that thinks they know everything.

I: Mm-hm.

P: Because what I know is I don’t know anything. I know it. And I know that my son’s generation and my grandson’s generations are going to look at food and animal health and human health differently.

I: Mm-hm.

I: And that’s positive. But I think what industrial agriculture’s asking us to do right now is to be frozen. In the world of 30 years ago. And to just keep marching on, senile, and, and to me, it’s scary as hell. You know? I-uh. I was, I, I was uh, my mother took hormones when she was pregnant with me and with my sister that was born two years later.

I: Mm-hm.

P: It’s called D-E-S. You can look it up. By the time I’d passed through, what was puberty for me, I knew the doctors didn’t know what they were doing. When I became a food scientist at Ohio State University, I understood what trans fats were. I never ate them. I wouldn’t touch them. That was 1973. I never stopped eating butter. Carraageenan is a powerful stabilizer.

I: Terageenan? Is that what you said?

P: Carra, carrassan.

I: Oh, thank you.
P: You can look at it, it is on the label of so many processed food products, it’ll make you sick. If you know that it’s what they feed lab rats to give them Crohn’s Disease. Do you know what Crohn’s Disease is?

I: Mh-hm.

P: You do, don’t you?

I: Mm-hm.

P: American people your age did not know what Crohn’s Disease was when I was your age. It was a disease that didn’t strike people until their late 40s or early 50s at the earliest.

I: Hm.

P: It’s now epidemic in our adolescent children.

I: Um … [Trying to move to the next question]

P: You’re getting, you’re getting my perspective, aren’t ya?

I: Oh no, this is what I wanted.

P: I know, I know.

I: I really appreciate you doing this interview with me.

P: This is, this is, yeah, yeah, thank you. Go ahead, Stephanie.

I: Yeah. Uh, NAME, my next question—so when you talk with ag---, with people about agriculture, are those people, did they grow up in rural communities or urban communities? Like what are they …

P: Oh gosh, so few, so few people did. But, but, but it is interesting because, because I get two different kinds of engagement from the people that did and the people that didn’t.

I: Uh-hm.

P: And the people that did grow up rurally or, you know, had, had family or friends that had farms, and went out and drank, you know, milk out of the bulk tank, and all those things. Or got, got the milk delivered to their doorstep in glass bottles with cream on the
top. They all, they, they taste our milk, and some of them cry.

I: Aw.

P: Oh, yeah. So, so, there’s people that, there’s people that have the memory that know, that can recognize it, and, that flavor, that taste in your mouth, it’s hard-wired. It’s a powerful memory for people. They haven’t had good milk for 30 years, to have good milk in their mouth, it just, it, it takes them right back. I’ve, I’ve seen it, I’ve watched it happen dozens and dozens of times. Right there, pouring a cup of milk for people, men, women. Oh yeah. It’s, it’s a huge, it’s a huge thing. And then people that haven’t grown up in that, you know, that don’t understand the rural situation, that don’t understand the dairy industry, then you know, you have wonderful engagement with them, because they want to know! They’re curious. It’s something they don’t know about, you know.

I: Mm-hm.

P: So it’s very interesting, it’s fascinating to ‘em. And they’re hungering, to get the real story, you know.

I: Mm-hm.

P: You know, not the dairy industry in California talking about happy cows. And the video that they have is made in New Zealand.

I: Oh.

P: Because they don’t have cows out walking on grass in California (laughs). I mean, that’s a, that’s a true story from two years ago.

I: Mm-hm.

P: I mean, how honest is that?

I: I didn’t know it was made in New Zealand …

P: That’s what the, that’s what the, that’s what the California dairy industry gives consumers. A vision of California happy cows that’s shot on the other side of the globe. [Long pause.] I mean, this, this is, this is completely dishonest.

I: Mm-hm. Yeah, I hadn’t heard about that actually …

P: Oh yeah. So people are, people are hungering for honesty. They’re hungering for
openness. And the dilemma for industrial agriculture is they can’t give it without making, without making the people unhappy.

I: M-hm.

P: And so when they have to start explaining … Do you know that Round-Up use in this country has gone up to the point where it’s almost a quarter pound of Round-Up for every acre of agricultural land in America?

I: Nm-hm.

P: Yeah, it’s gone up five-fold in 10 years. Now, does industrial agriculture want to tell that story to consumers? They don’t. This is a problem for them. So they can’t tell the truth. They can’t tell the whole truth. That’s why they need PR [laughs]. That’s why they need to offer free dinners at the Union and have somebody from industrial agriculture at every table. Dairy—food professionals, to tell them the part of the story they want to tell them. I think it’s really wrong, and I think it’s wrong that Ohio State University participates in it, because I don’t think it’s intellectually honest.

I: Uh, NAME, my next question …

P: [interrupts] If they had one of me at every table, too, now that would be a little bit more honest.

I: And which dinners are you referring to?

P: The one last night.

I: Oh, the, uh, wasn’t that the, I didn’t go, but what was that, Farm to Fork?

P: Yup.

I: Did you attend?

P: I, uh, it was for students, pre-registered.

I: Oh, ok.

P: I would’ve, I only learned about it yesterday, uh, being over at the food science department.

I: Oh, ok.
P: And, uh, if, uh, if I didn’t already have a dinner gig, date, from somebody out of state that night, I might’ve tried to get in and, and uh, be as calm and straightforward and whatever as I’m being with you.

I: Mm-hm.

P: Um. But, I, I mean, I’m a martial artist. I played a lot of chess in high school. I love to debate. I would’ve loved to have been there. The martial art I do is one in which you really use the opponent’s leverage and everything, you know.

I: Mm-hm.

P: So, you know, you don’t mind, I’m 170 pounds, you know. So, it’s, it’s great fun to throw a 250-pound person. So I would’ve loved to have been there last night, cause I think I could’ve had a lot of fun. And I think I could’ve contributed, to helping inform people, not educate them.

I: Mm-hm. Well, NAME, I can certainly pass along my ad--, to my advisor that you would be interested in participating next time.

P: I think, I think it’s the only honest forthright way to have this dialogue.

I: Mm-hm. And NAME, I may come back to that, but let me finish up with my questions cause we’re getting close …

P: Sure, sure.

I: And I want to be cognizant of your time.

P: You bet.

I: And some of these I feel like don’t really apply to you because you do talk with people, consumers, all the time. So do you feel qualified to answer questions about agriculture from consumers, um?

P: Imminently qualified.

I: Uh-hm. And then, my next part of that question was, can you share specific examples of conversations that have occurred, but I feel like you’ve already done that …

P: Yeah.
I: And then the next one, um, these are just supposed to be more kind of detailed ones, but do you believe it’s important to talk to consumers about agriculture? If so, why?

P: Absolutely.

I: Why do you think that’s important?

P: I think, I think, I think agriculture and food is central, to culture, to health, to commerce. You know, I like to say that there’s, there’s uh, there’s, there’s, there’s two intimate, close, sharing things that you can do with other people. One of them I only do with my wife. The other, you do around a table.

I: Uh-hm.

P: And I think there’s uh, I think they’re both very, very important things.

I: Uh-hm.

P: And that when, when we cheapen or commoditize or make either one of those things routine, and forget their sacredness, we demean them, and we demean ourselves. How about that?

I: That’s … a good answer … Um, so …

P: I love, I love, I love sharing food with other people. And to me, it’s a very profound, deep, sacred, human act and connection. And it should raise the hair on your arm, to sit down at a table, and share food with people. Whether they are strangers, or whether they’re your own family. And if you miss that event, if you don’t do that, you’re missing a huge part of being a human being.

I: Uh-hm. NAME, my next question, are there messages or topics, and again, you kind of already talked on this, that you believe that farmers are not informing consumers about?

P: Well … Industrial agriculture?

I: No, I’m saying just…

P: Yeah …

I: … Farmers in general, but I mean, you can break it down …

P: Well …
I: … If you wish.

P: Well, well, you know, in America, that is industrial agriculture. And yeah, I think, I mean, there’s a whole lot of things they’re not informing them about. That they should be. But they won’t.

I: Uh, can you give me some examples? Oh, are you still there?

P: I think, I think, I think, I think it, aw, I uh, I don’t want to, I don’t want to start, uh, er, I, I don’t want to start by, by picking at a bunch of specific things, although, you know, I could do that, too.

I: Mm-hm.

P: But I think there’s a generalization that industrial agriculture is based on producing volumes of food …

I: Mm-hm.

P: With a commitment to doing it as cheaply as possible. And I think we’ve succeeded in making the cheapest food on the planet. And in doing so, we’ve lost sight of the importance of making the finest, most healthful food we can make. And we’ve also lost sight of doing it in a way so that we leave the land better than we found it. Our industrial agriculture is extractive, it’s not regenerative. And all the brave talk about ‘this is how we’re going to feed the world’ – you don’t feed the world by a method that puts a pound of topsoil down the Mississippi River for every pound of corn it makes.

I: Did you want to add any more to that, NAME, or are you pretty good with that?

P: Oh, that’s enough [laughs].

I: Are you sure? Ok.

P: Oh yeah. Oh well, I think, I think, I think that the other problem, the other big problem is poison, you know.

I: Um.

P: You know, we have some, we keep, everybody keeps believing they’re going to make a deal with the devil.

I: When you say poison, are you talking about fertilizer, or what are you referencing?
P: I’m talking about glyphosate, I’m talking about Round-Up, I’m talking about 24d and Atrazine. Atrazine is the most common contaminant of America’s drinking water.

I: Hm.

P: It’s also linked to the amphibian def, def, deformation, all the problems with amphibians.

I: Hm.

P: I mean, these are … You know, Jesus said it best, ‘You live by the sword, you die by the sword.’

I: Mm-hm.

P: You know, they’ve, the chemical industries have been playing a game with regard to toxic chemicals for, you know, a century. An entire century. And they keep playing the game.

I: Mm-hm.

P: That there’s gonna be poisons that don’t hurt people or other living systems. Well, you know, which one of the 10 commandments, you know, do you figure, you can throw away? Poison is poison. And we have a pretty piddling understanding of human health. Or plant health. Or soil health. And to produce and apply to our food, poison, assuming that we understand all the possible, all the possible pathways of its toxicity is the height of arrogance. It’s the same arrogance that caused us to, uh, wipe out the buffalo. Wipe out the carrier pigeon.

I: Mm.

P: You know, it’s, it’s uh, it’s, it’s, it is disrespectful. It’s hubris. We should know better by now. We’ve been through this time and time and time again. You don’t put poison on your food. It’s really shameful that Round-Up is the most widely used herbicide in the world. It’s used more in America than anywhere. It’s the one herbicide that the USDA and FDA do not test for in our food supply. Did you know that?

I: Uh-hm.

P: The Farm Bureau should tell you that. They should educate you that. And do you want to know the reason it is supposedly not tested for?
I: Sure.

P: Because it’s “harmless.” My children are loaded with C8 from a DuPont plant on the Ohio River. C8 is a precursor of the production of Teflon. The DuPont plant injected their C8 chemical waste into injection wells in the ground. Does this sound, familiar? They were required by EPA to have test wells around those injection wells to see if any of the chemicals they were injecting were migrating into the watershed. For years, they found C8 in the samples, in their s--, in the testing wells. Testing wells are not required for injection wells for fracking waste. Because fracking waste has been declared to be non-toxic. Otherwise, they would have to have test wells around them to make sure it wasn’t going into the water supply. They don’t, so, but I digress. But back to the C8.

I: Uh-hm.

P: When DuPont found C8, they didn’t report it to the EPA because they said they thought it was harmless. So my children are, drank this water from the public water drinking system, from the time they were 5-years-old until the time they were discovering, it was discovered, at which time they were well into puberty. So they have well-elevated risks for some pretty exotic cancers, plus C8 is a hormone disruptor. So it’s particularly, we don’t even know what it does to people who are going through the hormonal changes of, from infancy through past puberty. We don’t even know. I really resent that. That represents the level of caution my government used in protecting my fa, my family, from industrial chemicals. I think they show the same disregard and the same willingness to be corrupted by money, with regard to all the issues of industrial, of, of agricultural chemicals.

I: Ok. NAME, thank you, you’ve done a nice job, and I apologize, we’ve already gone over the hour, I feel like it’s flown.

P: No, it’s alright. I think I’ve given you a pretty nice piece, haven’t I?

I: You have. No, this has been great.

P: I wish, I wish the president of the Ohio Farm Bureau would listen to every minute of it and then have lunch with me. Break bread and share a meal with me.

I: No, that’d be great.

P: Because I don’t consider him the devil. I consider him to be a well-intentioned professional who’s a brother in the ag-, in agriculture. But I think he’s terribly misguided.

I: Mm.
P: And I think he’s allowed, as industrial agriculture has allowed, the ideas of the end to justify the means. And that shit never works. That’s the story of human history. We’ve got to stick to our principles and what’s right or wrong. And any company that, that takes the political power that Monsanto has taken and prevents the labeling of food the way they have, is up to no good. No good could possibly come from this.

I: Um, and NAME, since, you’re basically living this, like you are living, I mean, with your company and you’re talking with consumers on a daily basis, how do you think, I mean, since you’re in the agricultural industry, how do you think, what’s a good way for people like you or farmers, to talk to people about agriculture, about what they do?

P: Honestly and openly. Honestly and openly. Hiding nothing. Sharing everything. You know, the fact that the testing that Monsanto always refers to as proving the safety of GMO crops and pesticides and all this stuff. You know, the … Any testing that’s done for drugs, for pharmaceuticals, for food, for agricultural chemicals, those tests should all be open. If you’re trying to find the truth, and really examine the safety of any of these things, you should never be able to have a test that isn’t in the public record. You should never be able to write a paper and give a result without giving all the raw data to the public. This is pure intellectual integrity.

I: Mm-hm.

P: We lost it in this country. About 40 years ago. And it’s, and we’re way down a very slippery slope. Where we justify through something called free market capitalism or some damn thing, doing things that aren’t honest, that aren’t open. That aren’t transparent. No good can come of this.

I: Uh, NAME, did you want to continue, or are you ok if I move on to the next question?

P: No, that’s good, that’s good, that’s good, Stephanie.

I: I don’t want to interrupt you if you’re still going.

P: No, no, no, I think, I think, I think actually, I think actually that’s a really good place to close to the interview. Cause it’s really fundamental.

I: Well, I just had like three more …

P: [interrupts] … To do, to do, to do supposed testing for safety.

I: Mm-hm.
P: And hiding the results that you don’t want people to see is completely disingenuous. It’s dishonest. And to have a government that allows profit-making corporations to use these methods whether we’re talking pharmaceuticals, or you know, drinking bottles, uh, baby bottles, or whatever it is, to allow that is to create the world that we’re living in in America today.

I: Uh …

P: I think it needs a lot of change.

I: NAME, and I’ll finish up with this one. What do you think is the greatest obstacle for people working in agriculture, connecting with consumers?

P: Boy, that’s a big one. That’s a good question, Stephanie. And maybe, I, I-uh, I hate to just be beating one drum, but I think the biggest obstacle—obstacle—for industrial agriculture is their inability to be open and honest and forthright.

I: Do you see one … Oh.

P: [interrupts] I think the biggest, I think the biggest, I think the biggest problem for people coming at it the way we are in sustainable agriculture, where we’re trying to be like that …

I: Mm-hm.

P: … Is overcoming, is overcoming a completely unfair different fight that’s being fought by industrial agriculture.

I: Hm, do you want to expound on that?

P: They’re playing, they’re playing by a different set of rules. They’ve got a completely different set of goals. But when they use fear of famine, fear of this, fear of that … I don’t, you know, that, that, that uh, that frankly, I think are oftentimes very specious arguments, very, very completely wrong arguments. I mean, the fact is, we have more calories for people on the planet today than ever in human history. But we’re told we’re all about to starve. The whole, the whole mantra, that there was a 20-year University of Wisconsin in Madison study of yields for industrial agriculture and for GMO, for uh, GMO slash industrial agriculture versus organic agriculture. We’re talking corn and soybeans. They found no significant difference. That study was buried. There’s a zero tolerance policy at USDA and FDA with regard to biotechnology and anything connected with Monsanto. I know it. I’ve know the people there for 30 years. I’ve watched them all change. I’ve watched the people that I’ve known for 20 years do Monsanto speak, and
nothing but. And I knew them 20 years ago. So, this is, this is our challenge. We’re trying to do one thing, somebody else is trying to do something completely different.

I: Mm-hm. And NAME, is there anything I didn’t ask about that you wanted to …

P: No, I think you did great, Stephanie. This is good. You, and uh, I appreciate it very much.

I: No, I appreciate you taking the time so much. Um, and NAME, I do kind of want to ask, this isn’t part of it, how do you describe your products? Do you say organic, or what do you …

P: Well, we’re not organic. No, no.

I: Ok, how do you describe it?

P: And I, frankly, frankly, I have a real problem with uh, with this whole thing of, of names, and names and specifications and all these kinds of things.

I: Mm-hm.

P: Because I think, I think standards that require meeting a certain standard to put some label on, I think there’s positive things about it, but I think there’s problems with it, too, because I think it leads to stasis, it leads to a lack of change, a lack of innovation, a lack of diversity, and then, ultimately, it’s open to being corrupted, you know. Big forces can say, ‘Well, but you can put DHA made from a carcinogenic neurotoxin in milk,’ you know, which is what they did, and still call it organic, which is what they did. So, I think, I think transparency and openness are better than labels and standards, and that you should speak clearly, and honestly, and you should not be spinning. And you should try to be as specific as you can about exactly what you’re doing. And you should, and, and that will allow diversity, it will allow evolution and change. I think that’s all positive.

I: Mm-hm. So you don’t say, it’s not like, I mean, I just feel like …

P: What we do say, what we do say, Stephanie, is we make the very finest milk we know how to make.

I: Mm.

P: And we practice continuous improvement in doing so, how bout that?
I: That sounds good.

P: Yeah.

I: … Because I wasn’t sure if you were just like ‘farm fresh,’ uh, you know what I mean, like, just how people describe stuff like that.

P: Yeah. Yeah. I’d say, I’d say the most important thing, you know, it’s, it’s, it is your methods, it is your processes that are important, and they are specific to any food product.

I: Mm-hm.

P: Yeah. So we try to be specific. And in doing so, we’re trying to inform people as to what we do. So they can make their informed choice.

I: Hm. Ok. And NAME, last thing, uh, it sounds like, I mean, you worked for some big companies, setting up everything. I was just curious, because I mean, you’re talking about industrial agriculture and then, I mean, did you work for these kind of companies, or was this totally different, what you were doing before?

P: Well, it’s kind of, it’s, it’s, it’s a good question, Stephanie. All of this stuff changed slowly over time. So when I got out of school in ’74, the dairy industry was still making a lot of milk that was more similar to mine than what is made today. So, you know, I was, I wasn’t involved in the industrialization of the product. I was involved in upscaling the processes that processed it.

I: Hm.

P: It was only later in my career that I came back, uh, I, I shouldn’t say back, but I found myself in a situation where, uh, you know, our best friends were grass-grazing dairy farmers, and of course I could tell the difference in the taste, and my children could tell the difference in the taste, and my daughter could tell the difference in her, hormonal activity in the winter when, when the grass-grazed milk wasn’t available, and we bought Kroger milk again.

I: Mm-hm.

P: So, so, it was then, later in my career, that I, that I, I went from being a dairy nerd focused on designing and building big volume processing facilities, which I was doing for the sake of, you know, the efficiency, not wasting energy, and food, and things like that.
I: Mm-hm.

P: But I was never, yeah, so, so, uh, uh, it more comes back to the nature of the milk itself in my situation. The nature of the milk was changing all during that time, and it was going downhill …

I: Mm.

P: …And so, when I came back, when I, when I resigned from [laughs], my, you know, when I closed my consulting company and stopped designing big food, big dairy processing plants, then I came back to the process of how the milk was made, and how it’s different.

I: Mm-hm. Ok. And then, just so I have, since you talked so much about industrial agriculture, can I get what, how you would define that?

P: Cause I think it’s a very good question, so, if you don’t mind, I’ll hang up, and then I’ll call you right back.

[Calls back, starts recording again.]

I: Um, NAME, my last question, hopefully the last question for you, thanks for your patience. How would you define industrial agriculture?

P: Uhh. Yeah. Um. You know, I guess I’ve got to confess—uh, to me, it’s a pejorative. It’s a pejorative. You know what that means, right?

I: Uh-huh.

P: You know, so, um, I guess, I guess I see it as a, as a, uh, lowest cost, uh, uh, um, a low, a lowest cost, um, focused, uh, agriculture. And, and, uh, that has become extractive. You know. I think it’s kind of, you know, in the last question, where you, where I was saying, in the 1970s, you know, there was a lot of good milk being made in America that was more like the milk we make now.

I: Mm-hm.

P: And I think in the same way, industrial agriculture began with all the best intentions. Uh, 40 years ago, 50 years ago, green revolution, all of these things. And, uh, but it’s continued to morph and change, and, and, uh, to me, it’s become a sinister juggernaut that’s absolutely conscienceless and shameless, in pursuing its own narrow agenda, and I think an example is, is, you know, getting, getting hundreds of millions of dollars,
taxpayer money, to build, uh, manure digesters.

I: Hm.

P: You know, I think, I think that’s a good, that’s a good example of what I see as being negative in industrial agriculture. Ten percent of the operation of a CAFO is the cost of manure disposal. So when you, uh, uh, when industrial agriculture goes and brainwashes, and says, oh, we’re wor, this environmental problem, we ought to get vegetarians and vegans and all other taxpayers to remove our cost of manure disposal, and put it on taxpayers [laughs]. Well, that’s, that’s cheating. On one hand, they want to scream ‘free markets’ and ‘efficiency’ and all this stuff. On the other hand, taxpayers are supposed to remove part of your cost of doing business from you?

I: Hm.

P: I don’t think so. And do you realize, that in, I mean, you probably remember in December, there was concern about the government shutting down because they had to pass an appropriations bill.

I: Mm-hm.

P: Remember that?

I: Mm-hm.

P: Industrial agriculture got a rider slipped into that 6,000-page appropriation bill that exempted all manure digesters in America from any regulation or monitoring with regard to air quality or greenhouse gases.

I: Hm.

P: Does that sound fair to you?

I: I had not heard of that. So wait, say that one more time.

P: No, you wouldn’t hear about it, would ya? So, uh, what’s your email, Stephanie? [Interviewer gives out email address to participant.]

P: Kay. Just think here. [Talks to someone nearby.] Ryan, the three articles that we got, on the manure digesters, email them to Stephanie here. Here’s her email.

P: Yeah, so here’s industrial agriculture brainwashing their CAFOs by getting manure
digesters paid for by taxpayers. And then they step in, secretly, and get those manure digesters exempted from, from the very regulations, from the very monitoring that would confirm that they’re performing properly. That’s cheating. Industrial agriculture in America today is the poster child for ‘Cheaters win,’ and I resent it. And I intend to fight against it.

I: So, NAME, when do you think of industrial ag, industrial agriculture, do you think of a size of a farm …

P: Nope.

I … Or are you just saying …

P: Nope. I think about, I think, I, I, I, I don’t think, you know, it’s uh, I think, I think, there’s a lot. You know, in industrial agriculture, there’s a lot to it, you know. I could narrow the focus to just dairy that I know so very well.

I: Mm-hm.

P: It isn’t about size. But I think, you know, Wendell Berry said the end of the family farm was when one farmer thought that he’d rather own his neighbor’s farm than to have that neighbor as a neighbor.

I: Hm.

P: I think it’s a pretty profound statement. When I think of industrial agriculture today, I think about a disregard for uh, some of the inconvenient truths about what industrial agriculture is and does. If it’s not improving the soil fertility, then it is degrading it. Industrial agriculture is degrading the soil and the soil fertility of America.

I: Hm.

P: Period.

I: Ok. NAME, I think that is all I need. Is there anything else you wanted to add?

P: I’ll tell you what, Stephanie. Maybe you can’t do it, and I could understand why you couldn’t, but if you could send me this tape, I’d appreciate it, cause I think I, I think you brought out a lot of good comments in me. It’d be fun to just be able to get them typed up. But, but, if I asked that, I wouldn’t do it in the context of you’re asking the questions, or this is being the survey, but rather it’d just, uh, you brought a, I think I’ve said a lot of things fairly well cause, uh, cause you ask good questions, and I’m, of course, I’m
constantly thinking about these things, and, and uh, my comments were partly a product of me being aware of what happened at the Union last night, you know.

I: Mm-hm. Well, yeah, NAME, it’s going to take me a while because it looks like it’s almost an hour and a half, so let me see how long that would take. And let me check with my advisor to see if I can do that.

P: I understand.

I: Uh, if I can send you, obviously, this is what you said, um …

P: Sure.

I: At the very least, I can call you back and read back what you said to confirm that with you. Um …

P: Oh, you don’t need to do that, you don’t need to do that. I’d love to have the, I’d love to have what I said, cause, uh, cause, I’m always doing, I’m always trying to get stuff down and across and uh, after, after, after, after uh, after spending an hour and a half like this, talking like this, I uh, I wish I had, I wish I had started a tape myself just so …

I: Oh yeah.

P: Just so, just cause, I uh, uh, I think I did put some pieces together, and I think I said some things well, and uh, and uh …

I: Uh-huh.

P: This is a good situation, in that, I’m, you know, I’m trying to be um, you know, not be some bomb-thrower, but try to speak very clearly and simply and uh, uh, I wouldn’t want to say unemotional. I, I’m incapable of being unemotional.

I: [laughs]

P: But, but uh, proud of it. But uh, but uh, you know, just, you know, just, I, I, I think I spoke well today, and, and uh, uh, it’d be fun, it’d be fun to capture it.

I: Oh, sure. Well, let me check with my advisor, and I’ll get back to you.

P: Stephanie, that’s great. Thank you so much for, for your work …

I: Oh, no problem …
P: … And for taking the time, and asking good questions and being a good listener, and all those kind of things, too.

I: Yeah, well, W-----, thank you so much for your time, this was so kind of you.

P: Oh, happy to, happy to.

I: Alright, well, I’ll be in touch, but take care, ok?

P: You, too. Have a good morning.

I: Thanks!

P: Alrighty.

I: Bye, NAME.

P: Buh-bye.
Transcript of Interview with Participant 3 on Friday, February 20, 2015, at 9:21 a.m. I already read him the verbal script.

I: Ok, NAME, it is 9:21 on Friday, and I’ll go ahead and get started with some survey questions if that works for you.

P: That’ll be fine.

I: Oh great. First of all, what is your occupation or job title?

P: I am the assistant manager at the FARM SHOW.

I: Great, how long have you been in that position?

P: Eleven years.

I: Good for you.

P: And, and in addition to working at FARM SHOW, I’m also a farmer as well, and so, I farm corn and soybeans, and I also work … Part of the farm deals with agri-entertainment.

I: Oh.

P: So, you kind of got a mixed bag here, a little bit of, what all I do.

I: No, no, I’m excited to get information from you. This is great. So NAME, where do you live?

P: In southwestern Franklin County.

I: Oh, ok, very good. Uh, So, NAME, do you live, my next question is kind, do you live in a house, in an apartment … ?

P: In a house. On a farm.

I: Um, very good. NAME, my next demographic question is, how old are you?

P: 45.

I: Ok. And then what was your major and minor during college at Ohio State?
P: The undergrad was a major in agronomy.

I: Mm-hm.

P: And my master’s degree was in soil science.

I: Very good. So what year did you graduate from Ohio State with those degrees?

P: The undergrad was 1993. And my graduate degree was 1997.

I: Ok. Very good. Well, NAME, thank you, that gives me a little bit of background moving forward, so I will go ahead and start with our first question. Um, to begin, where did you grow up?

P: Uh, southwestern Franklin County. Two miles from where I live now.

I: That’s very convenient [laughs].

P: Yeah, it is.

I: Um, so, NAME, my next quest--, second question is, did you have any connection to agriculture growing up?

P: Yes.

I: How so?

P: I grew up on a, a corn and soybean farm and also a, oh, a fruit and vegetable farm.

I: Oh wow.

P: The fruits and vegetables consisted of everything from strawberries, pumpkins, raspberries, to cantaloupes, tomatoes, peppers, um, flowers, greenhouses, I mean … When you talk about that diversification of agriculture, that’s what I dealt with. And then, also having people come to our farm, in agri-entertainment, and, take hayrides, pick pumpkins, play in our barn with straw, and things like that. So, it was, I don’t know if you want to call it agriculture education, but I mean, we put together a farm there so people could come and learn about agriculture and have fun. So.

I: That’s great. So how many acres did you guys have of everything?

P: When I was growing up, um, it, when we were in corn and soybeans, it was about 650
I: Mm-hm.

P: … So then we scaled back and went to about 220 [acres] with the fruit and vegetables and things like that.

I: Oh wow. That is really neat, that you guys were able to do that, and, do more of the agritainment. Very neat. That kind of goes ahead and answers some of my next few questions, NAME …

P: Sure.

I: If it’s repetitive, I mean, you can just …

P: That’s fine, it’s no problem. I understand. You, you’re writing a thesis.

I: [laughs]

P: I’ve been there.

I: Yes, you certainly have. Um, so if you grew up in a rural community, did you live on a grain farm or a farm where livestock was raised?

P: It was primarily a grain farm. Um, very little livestock, I mean, it was on the scale of 4-H for livestock.

I: Mm. Sure. Um, and then, my, uh, the kind of probe to that was how many acres, what they raised specifically, but you really already covered that. Um.

P: Ok. If I need to be more specific, I can do that.

I: No, I think you’re pretty good. I mean …

P: Ok.

I: … It sounds like you guys grew a lot of different things. And my fourth question is, what were the occupations of your parents?

P: Uh, both farmers.

I: Very good. Um, ok, NAME, um, No. 5, if you did grow up on a farm, after graduating
from Ohio State, did you end up returning to the rural community where you grew up, or did you move somewhere else?

P: I stayed.

I: Very good. Ummm. No. 6, if you grew up on a farm, did you ever think of returning to work on the farm you grew up on, or by starting your own farm.

P: Both. Maybe that’s not, what you want to hear, I mean. Um, how do I want to say this? My goal was always to have my own farm, and I have it now. So, I mean, I, I wanted my own farm, but it’s still, you farm with your family.

I: Mm-hm.

P: So, I have my own farm.

I: Ok. So, it’s like you bought your own property kind of thing?

P: Yes.

I: Or, like, you all work together …

P: Yes, yeah, I have my own land, I have my own equipment, things like that. I mean, we still share equipment back and forth and things, but um, I, I fill out my own tax forms.

I: Mm-hm. Oh, sure. Uh, and how many acres do you have then, NAME?

P: Right now, I have right at 325 [acres] …

I: And, do you do the agritainment on your own, as well?

P: No, I still do that with my family farm. That’s, that’s, my, my parents’ side. What I do is that I help them with it. So, the 325 [acres] are my own …

I: Mm-hm.

P: And then the agritainment part of it is my parents’ side, and I, I assist them with labor and things like that. I don’t take any payment for it.

I: Sure. Uh, NAME, No. 7, um, what do you think is the main reason students do not move back to a rural community after graduating from a college like Ohio State?
P: [long sigh] One, I would say may be the lack of opportunity to go back to the farm, if they wanted to do that, or the finances aren’t there, of not being able to go back. Another reason, um, maybe they just want to get some experience off the farm before they go back, and then they decide, um, it’s not there, when they want to go back. I mean, when I interview a lot of students, cause I hire students here at OSU, and that’s one of the questions, like ‘did you grow up on a farm?’ ‘what do you want to do when you get done?’ And a lot of my students that I hire, um, the opportunity isn’t there for them at the current time to go back to the farm. The desire’s there. But the opportunity isn’t.

I: Like, so you’re saying basically not enough work for them to do?

P: Yeah. Or the finances, well, the finances that the farm has will generally support one family, but maybe not two.

I: Mm-hm. Ok. Well, and my follow-up to that was, can you give some examples? And you did. Um, No. 8, while you were a student at Ohio State, did your classes teach you about how to talk to consumers about agriculture?

P: …How to talk to?

I: Mm-hm.

P: … Consumers about agriculture? Uh, I would say one class did. That was my speech class.

I: So if yes, what did you learn?

P: How to be a better communicator.

I: Mm-hm.

P: And, and, we were asked to, um, put together a project to communicate to the public and, and sell a product to the public. So, uh, that product could be anything from different types of fertilizer to products that [a] consumer would um, use.

I: Mm.

P: That’s about the only class I can think of that taught something like that.

I: Um, have you found that knowledge helpful as an adult?

P: Oh yeah. Anytime you can learn how to speak better, it’s a good thing.
I: Mm-hm. Um, NAME, No. 9, is your current job in the agricultural field?

P: Yes.

I: Um, if yes, can you explain what your connection to agriculture is in your job?

P: My job is to … as assistant manager of the FARM SHOW, is to put an event together that promotes agriculture.

I: Mm-hm.

P: And our primary audience is farmers, so we’re kind of, speaking to the, let’s see, what [mumbles], uh, I mean, our, our focus is agriculture. It is promoting agriculture, it is promoting new technologies, promoting educational aspects about what’s going on, in the agricultural community. So, every day, I’m working toward the FARM SHOW and part of my role is to go out and speak to different audiences, and I don’t do that a lot.

I: Mm-hm.

P: But, I mean, we’ll go out and speak to Ki, Kiwanis clubs or Rotary clubs or things like that. Tell them about new technologies in agriculture, what we’re doing at FARM SHOW to improve agriculture, not only from an exhibit standpoint, but from an agricultural standpoint, because we farm 1,400 acres there, and we’re using the latest technology, and things like that.

I: Mm-hm.

P: Sorry if I get a little long-winded.

I: No, you’re fine. No, it’s--your job position sounds like a really neat one to have.

P: It is.

I: Um, oh, for sure. What does a typical day look like for you?

P: A typical day for me is to, um, focus on the logistics of the FARM SHOW, kind of behind the scenes, making sure that when the visitor comes to FARM SHOW, or the exhibitor comes to FARM SHOW, that we are planning and preparing, whether it’s the, uh, parking or tickets or the food or whatever else is gonna be done at FARM SHOW, that it is done to the best it can be. So, um, I do, I work with the students, where I hire students to work at FARM SHOW and mentor them. I mean, that’s part of the process.
Some days, I talk to students a lot. Other days, I don’t talk to very many students. And then there’s the financial side of it, working with farm budgets and um, making sure that the farming operation is ready to go when the weather is appropriate, and all the different aspects of that. Working with equipment and um, the personnel and the companies that provide, uh, inputs for us and things like that. So, um, I’d say that’s pretty good.

I: Wow, it sounds like it changes a lot.

P: It does.

I: I mean, there are a lot of things to do for a three-day event.

P: Yeah.

I: [laughs]

P: Yeah, we only work three days a year. [joking tone]

I: [laughs] You’re preparing for that, every day of the year.

P: Yeah.

12:40 I: Uh, so NAME, question No. 10, if you grew up with some experiences in agriculture, would you describe the as positive or negative, and why would you describe them that way?

P: I would describe them as positive.

I: Mm-hm. Could you tell me, like, specific examples …

P: … Yeah. And the reason why … or an example of positive is … Everything that I did growing up on the farm has given me a foundation of where I am today and what I’ve done. And, like, um, how to be a good manager of money, how to fix and repair things on the farm or at my home. How to appreciate, um, the land. How to take care of what is given to us. And realize that we’re here for a sh, for a short period of time. And I want to leave it better than what it was given to me. So …

I: Mm-hm. Um, NAME, question No. 11, um, do you talk about agriculture with the people and consumers you interact with on a regular basis at work or with people you see during the week?

P: Yeah, I do. Mm-hm.
I: Um, I guess, how often do these conversations occur with conversations?

MS: Oh, I would say probably three or four times a week.

I: Ok. Uh, NAME, my next question, and feel free to jump in if you want to add anything, um, if you talk with agriculture—with consumers about agriculture, what types of subjects related to agriculture typically come up in conversation?

P: One of the big ones is GMO.

I: Mm-hm.

P: And, do I need to explain that to …

I: Yeah, if you just want to give me any specific examples?

P: Um, just to talk about the differences between, with GMOs, it would be uh, the, the safety or the health issues compared to non-GMO and GMO, and things like that.

I: Mm-hm.

P: And the other one would be like, new equipment technologies, um, like auto-steer with tractors and how the new equipment is changing compared to the past and things like that. That’s just a couple.

I: Mm-hm. Yeah, those are good examples. So, if you do talk with consumers about agriculture, do you usually initiate these conversations?

P: Sometimes. I would say it’s 50-50.

I: Ok.

P: Because, uh, well, they know I farm, and so, sometimes a question will come up, ‘hey, what do you think about this?’ or ‘what is actually going on?’ Or, so … A lot of times a question will be asked by them, and then other times, I’ll just tell them what we’re doing. And then that conversation leads to something else.

I: Mm-hm. Um, ok, well, I have it broken down with this one a little bit. So, if yes, why do you choose to initiate them?

P: Uh, repeat that, I didn’t quite hear you.
I: Oh, you’re fine. Uh, if you initiate these conversations, is there a reason why you choose to start those?

P: Uh, just to have uplifting and positive conversation. Just uh, to kind of let people know what’s going on.

I: Mm-hm. And then, if you do initiate these conversations, are people usually receptive to talking about agriculture?

P: Oh yeah.

I: Ok. Uh, my next question is, ‘do you talk about agriculture with people who mostly grew up in rural, urban, or suburban areas?’

P: That’s a good one, let me think about that one. I would kind of say it would be … A mixture, and I don’t know how you want to handle this one, a mixture between rural and suburban.

I: Mm-hm.

P: So, half and half. I mean, the community I still live in, I mean, it’s still kind of rural slash suburban, so I get a little bit of both.

I: Ok, um, so, my next question was, do you talk with one group more than another? But it sounds like it’s a mix, um …

P: Yeah. I would say, right now, when we’re talking about agriculture issues, it would be more of suburban. I mean, when I talk to the rural folks, I mean, they’re other farmers. And I mean, there’s, we’re talking about what we’re doing, not so much whether a GMO’s good or bad.

I: Mm-hm, right. Um, and I guess, when you talk about agriculture with people from rural and suburban groups, um, how receptive is each group about talking about agriculture?

P: How … Say that again.

I: Oh, no, you’re fine. How receptive …

P: Oh, they’re very receptive.

I: Ok. Um, and you actually probably have a lot of experience with this next one since
you work at FARM SHOW, and then you also help out with the agritainment business. One, do you consumers ask you questions about agriculture?

P: Yes, they do.

I: If yes, what kind of questions do they ask?

P: When it, if, if we talk about like from the agritainment side of things, they want to know how crops are grown and what it takes to grow a crop, and, and things like that. It’s more of the nuts and bolts of how the crop is grown. Um. They also ask about pesticides. Were there pesticides used on the fruit and vegetables? And the third one they ask about, is it organic?

I: Ok. How do you respond when they ask you questions?

P: Well, first of all, positive. And two, you tell them the truth.

I: Mm-hm.

P: So, and, and if, if they, we say ‘no, it’s not organic, but here’s what we’re doing to reduce the amount of pesticides’ or here’s what we’re doing to improve the quality of the fruit so that it’s safe for them and it’s safe for us. And the first thing I tell them is that, my family’s going to eat more than they ever will, so why would I endanger my family?

I: Mm.

P: So, that one works pretty well.

I: And do you enjoy answering their questions, or does it feel more like a chore?

P: Oh, I enjoy it. I’m a little bit of an extrovert.

I: [laughs] Uh, my next question is, do you feel qualified to answer questions about agriculture from the consumers around you?

P: Yes.

I: Um, why or why not, and can you share any, any other specific examples that come up to you?

I: Mm-hm.

P: And because of my time speaking to the public. That’s why I feel confident in doing … And, I understand, um, what I am talking about, and what I mean by that is, I understand the chemical labels. I understand the chemistry of what I’m doing, and I’m familiar with the operation that go on. And so, that’s, that’s why I feel comfortable talking about it. And, I mean, there, sometimes, you’ll get questions that you can’t answer, and you just say, ‘that’s a good question, I don’t have that answer.’ But, it’s, the reason why I’m comfortable is because I have the knowledge of what I’m doing because I’m the person doing it versus hearing about it and saying, ‘well, I think that’s what they do.’

I: Mm-hm.

P: And there was a third part to your question.

I: No, you’re fine. It was just the specific examples part.

P: Ok.

I: But I mean, I think you’ve already touched on it, unless you want to add something else.

P: No, I don’t, something may come up later, I don’t think so.

I: Ok. My next question is do you think it’s important to talk to consumers about agriculture?

MS: Yes.

I: If so, why do you think it’s important?

P: They need to understand how food is um, grown, and processed, and produced, so that when they have an understanding of what it takes to produce a crop, there may be a, a willingness to have an open mind about changes and new technologies like GMO. And, and, if you understand the way it’s grown, you may not have to request or require something uniquely grown like organic. And so, I’m not saying that organic is bad, or the other is, is better. It’s, if you understand the processes, and you understand health benefits, then you’re able to make a good decision on what you want. So, I mean, people have a right to purchase whatever they like, but if they have good, sound information, then they may be able to save money and time on, um, the food they eat. Because it ultimately comes down to that. It’s not whether the pumpkin is, dark orange or bright, or
It’s not whether the strawberry is the biggest strawberry you pick or the smallest strawberry, it’s the quality that goes into it, and the health benefit. Is the product that I’m eating safe, for one, and then, what are the health benefits? And so, and, and, I mean, and that can be from whether they pick it off the vine, or they pick it up from the store.

I: Mm-hm. NAME, those are some great examples. Thanks for sharing those. My next question is, are there any messages or topics that you believe the agricultural community are not educating or informing consumers about?

P: That are not at all … I, I don’t know if there isn’t, that there isn’t one that they’re not … Um, I, I think they … What I can say is they can continue to push, um, the importance of um, food safety and I would say, um, and, and, what I would like at is, um, the sustainability of farming. And what I mean by that is, using inputs properly to make sure that their food is of high quality and safe. And, and so many times, and it, it kind of goes back to maybe in the 50s, and 60s, and 70s where, um, we didn’t have the technology we have today where some of the chemicals we’re, we were using then, um, were maybe more detrimental to the environment. But now, the chemicals we are using may be an once per acre versus two quarters per acre.

I: Mm-hm.

P: And the safety, the safety factor that we have today is much more compared to what it was 20 or 30 years ago, and it’s all based upon technology. But, I think that people don’t understand. I think they still think the farmer goes out and just dumps things on the field, and the farmer doesn’t have the education and the resources to make good decisions. And, that really needs to be brought to the forefront of ‘hey, the technology we’re using today is far superior to what it took to put the man on the moon.’ I mean, using satellites, using censors, and using implements to reduce the amount of inputs we’re putting on, whether it’s pesticides or fertilizers. Sure, do we have problems? Yeah. I mean, we’ve got blue-green algae in lakes in Ohio. But, if we didn’t have the technology that we have today, it would be a whole lot worse.

I: Hm. NAME, um, in your opinion, what would be a good way for farmers to interact with or talk with consumers about agriculture?

MS: Wow. I, I think a couple ways. We’re such a video-based society.

I: Mm-hm.

P: And, I think it would be doing some short document-- documentaries on what we’re doing in agriculture, and bringing those personal stories to the forefront. Um, I think
sometimes they look at agriculture as, ‘there’s this big conglomerate out there and there’s these corporate [emphasize] farms’ and it’s like, ‘Alright, you know, drive across agriculture and stop at a 2,000-acre farm. You’re going to see a mom and a dad and a son and a wife and kids.’ Those aren’t corporate farms. They may be incorporated, for tax reasons, but those aren’t corporate farms. Or you go to a large dairy that has a thousand head or something like that, you’re going to see two or three families working at that. And, so, is their milk any better or any worse because it comes from a thousand head dairy than from a dairy that has 85 cows? I don’t think so. I mean, it may be better.

I: Mm-hm.

P: … Because they’re, they’re using robots to milk the cows and everything that the robot checks is from weight to feed to everything else. So, I’m not saying the 80-acre cows dairy is bad. I’m just saying that you may get as good as quality from an 88, from an 80-head cow herd, as you would from a thousand cow herd. So, I think these documentaries, um, if they can bring the stories of these farmers forward, and saying, here’s what we’re doing to make your milk safe, to produce its quality of milk and putting a, putting a face to it, because (sighs), there’s commercials out there [cuts out] … for --Agra Farms, and they’re sticking …

I: Oh, wait, NAME? Oh, hey, NAME?

P: Yeah?

I: Sorry, you cut out. Could you restart that sentence?

P: Sure. [laughs] The one about … Um, there, there’s commercials out there that are pro-- , that are saying that all agriculture is, is corporate. Um, it’s like a factory. And, I mean, whether a hog comes from 2,000 head place or a 100 head, I mean, they’re both needing to keep that hog healthy to produce a good quality, um, piece of meat. So … And there are issues that deal with both, but, I mean, you still got, the hog has to be healthy to eat, so …

I: Uh, NAME, my next question, and you may have already kind of touched on this, but I’ll ask it just anyway. Um, do you have any recommendations on how farmers themselves co--, how, like as a farmer, how he or she could reach out to people who are not directly connected with, to agriculture?

P: I think one of the ways that they could was, uh, being involved in some type of organization like, um. There’s different organizations, whether it’s Corn Growers or Pork Producers, or something like that. The farmer may not be able to speak himself, but he may be able to be part of um, an organization where somebody can speak on his behalf.
Because if somebody doesn’t speak on the farmers’ behalves, there won’t be much of us. There aren’t much of us around now, anyways. But, um, as people get removed two or three generations from the farm, they don’t have any understanding about what goes on. I mean, even what the inside of a tractor looks like. And, I mean, maybe that’s something that needs to be told itself. And that could be done, like from the previous question. But, um, it’s, it’s one of those things that, um, get, be involved in a group, or an organization that can help you speak on your behalf, if you’re not able to.

I: Mm-hm. Um, NAME, this is my second-to-last question, so you’re getting close. What do you believe is the greatest obstacle for farmers interacting with consumers who are no longer directly connected to agriculture?

P: I think the consumer today … I think the biggest obstacle is, um, the consumer doesn’t see the need to interact with the farmer. I, I … And, I think, the consumer, as long as that consumer can go to the grocery store and pick up the food that they need and know that it is safe, then what else do they need to worry about? And the second half of that is, we are in a realm now of a lot of processed foods, and where you go get your pizza already made. Or you can, your macaroni and cheese shows up out of a box, and it’s like, alright, the disconnect there is, ‘Well, I guess it was grown. I’m not even sure where macaroni comes from.’ It’s, what is macaroni grown from? Well, it’s pasta. Does it grow like that? It’s one of those that, the disconnect is, the grocery store is now the farmer. They go … The, the consumer goes to the grocery store to, to, farm, to pick up their vegetables, to do all of that. And we have grown accustomed to having our vegetables or our milk or whatever else there all year-long. Bananas are in the store all year-long. It’s not a seasonal type of thing. Strawberries are kind of there all year long. It’s not a seasonal type of thing. So … I see, I mean, from a diversified farming operation, I mean, farmers markets are becoming more popular.

I: Mm-hm.

P: So that may be a way of people, farmers can have a connection to the people, if you grow that type of thing. But if you’re a corn and soybean farmer, you will never step foot in a farmers market to sell your product because, I mean, you’re not gonna sell corn and soybeans to them. I mean, so … You’ve kind of got two different things going on there. I mean, yes, the diversified farmer has a unique opportunity to interact with those people, um, at, when things are in season. And along with that, but it’s … I would, I would say the grocery store is … I mean, it’s a wonderful place. We go to a grocery store every week as well. But, that’s kind of, the, where I would call the disconnect. It’s like, alright, if you want to build a connection, how, how would … Maybe the grocery stores need to start, um, looking at the agriculture community and saying, alright, put … And Meijer I think has tried to do this, try to put up some pictures of the farmers that grew the produce. And, and I walk into Meijer, I’m like, ‘wow, that’s pretty cool. They’ve got a picture of
the farmer that grew this lettuce.’

I: Mm-hm.

P: And it puts a face with the product. It, it … What it does, and I understand what Meijer’s doing … It, it, it shows that hey, there’s a person that grew this, and they, they look good, they look prosperous and they’re willing to put their face on what they grew. And it … It kind of comes back to this point of purchase: where is this product coming from?

I: Mm-hm.

P: So … Boy, I hope you can pull something out of all of this [laughs].

I: I definitely think I will be able to. Um, is there anything else I didn’t ask about that you wanted to add to this conversation?

P: I don’t think so.

I: Ok. Well, I think that’s everything … I’m trying to think if there’s anything else I need. So when, I guess, real quick, going back to the agritainment …

P: Uh-hm.

I: When are you guys open?

P: The strawberries, we always pick strawberries and then, for strawberry season, it’s just during the month of June.

I: Mm-hm.

P: So usually it’s the last weekend of May going into June, and all’s we have for that is strawberry picking, and so … But the agri-entertainment is pumpkins, and that’s during the last week of September and the whole month of October. And so, we’re open seven days a week for about 35 days. People come to the farm and they take a hayride, pick a pumpkin. Well, we turned our cattle barn into about four to five thousand bales of straw with a slide. We have a small, what I call like a small petting zoo, some goats, and we have some chickens and things. And, and, we have some bales maze and a corn maze and a sunflower maze and, so, um … We have places to take pictures, and it’s just … Our goal in this is to provide the family to come out and just have a good weekend, and get a pumpkin and just enjoy themselves … So. We’ve been doing that since 1980.
I: What made you guys start doing that?

P: When?

I: No, what made your parents decide to start doing that?

P: Oh. That, that’s interesting. Um, my dad really didn’t want to do corn and soybeans anymore. He was tired of having gu-- paying guys cash rent, haggle them about cash rents going up, and he, he really wanted to do something different and unique. And, my dad was not the type of guy that really was out in front of the crowd. That’s the unique thing, is that he was always there and made things happen, but, um, he never wanted to be the guy that was, like what you’re talking to me about, being out, talking to the consumers and things. He would greet them and things, but he wouldn’t be the type of guy you’d put him up on stage and say, ‘Tell us about why agriculture is so important to the, to the consumer.’ So, he, he would rather make the perfect pumpkin for you, or make the pretty strawberry for ya, and, and so that you came and had a good time. And, so … Um, and then, uh, a sidebar, what we would do is take our fruit we had leftover, and then my mom would make jams and jellies and things like that out of it. So we have a side business that we’re, it’s jams and jellies and dip mixes and things like that, so …

I: That sounds like a neat opportunity to reach out to consumers.

P: It was. I have, I have done about everything. I have shucked and jived produce on a street corner all the way to picking broccoli in the rain to driving an auto-steer tractor. So, um … I had a pretty unique education. At home, and that’s not even including what I got in college. So.

I: Ok, well, NAME, seriously, thank you so much for your time.
Transcript of Interview with Participant 4 on Monday, February 23, 2015, at 3:05 p.m. I already read him the verbal script.

I: Ok, NAME, thanks so much, it is 3:05 on Monday, and I will go ahead and get started. Uh, my first, I wanted to ask you some demographic questions. Um, what is your occupation and, or job title?

P: I work for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and my title is district conservationist.

I: Very good. And NAME, where do you live?

P: I live in NAME County, Ohio. I work in NAME County, Ohio [western Ohio].

I: Ok. Do you live in a house, an apartment, a condo, or a farmhouse?

P: A farmhouse.

I: Ok. NAME, the next question is: how old are you?

P: Uh, 60 years old.

I: Ok. What was your major and minor in during college at Ohio State?

P: I didn’t have a minor, but my major was wildlife management in what was called the School of Natural Resources when I went there.

I: Oh. What year did you graduate from Ohio State?

P: 1986.

I: Ok. And did you return to Ohio State for graduate work?

P: I did not.

I: Ok. Alright, NAME, those are my demographic questions. Um, so the first question I have for you is: where did you grow up?

P: In Lawrence County, Ohio, down on the Ohio River.

I: Oh, Lawrence County. Ok. Um, did you have any connection to agriculture growing up?
P: I did.

I: Ok …

P: My grandfather, my father owned a farm, my grandfather was a farmer on the farm and had beef cattle, a small milking operation, and raised tobacco, hay, a little bit of corn and a little bit of wheat.

I: Ok. That kind of goes with my next question, which is if you grew up on, in a rural community, did you live on a grain farm or a farm where livestock were raised?

P: More, more livestock, yeah. Everything was pretty much raised for the livestock.

I: Mm, ok. Ok. And, NAME, so many—did you say a number of livestock?

P: Uh, probably never more than 40 head of beef cattle and never more than 25, let’s say 30 milking cows. That would have been the most we had ever had.

I: Oh, wow. Ok. And, do you know how many acres your farm was, or is?

P: Yeah, about 200, bout right at 200.

I: Ok. And NAME, what were the occupations of your parents?

P: Um. My mother was a homemaker, my dad owned a food brokerage. They represent several different food manufacturers/companies and sell their products.

I: Uh. And NAME, my fifth question, if you grew up on a farm, after graduating from Ohio State, did you end up returning to the rural community where you grew up, or did you move somewhere else?

P: I did not, I moved somewhere else, obviously.

I: Right. Um, so, and you live in NAME County, right?

P: That’s correct.

I: NAME, my next question: if you grew up on a farm, did you ever think of returning to work on the farm you grew up on, or starting your own farm?

P: I didn’t.
I: Ok. If you did move away after graduating, what kept you from returning to that rural community?

P: Oh, my jobs, more than any given thing.

I: My next question: what do you think is the main reason students do not move back to a rural community after graduating from a college like Ohio State?

P: Jobs.

I: Mm-hm. Can you give me any specifics or examples?

P: Well, it’s, it’s, when … Take my example. Lawrence County, Ohio, is extremely rural, even today, and uh, the opportunities for jobs are not nearly as broad as they might be in a whole host of other areas. And uh, for a whole slew of majors, not just agriculture and farming, but about anything, but certainly that would be a large part of it. If you’re not moving back to the farm and working on the farm, and yet you want to work in agriculture, um, probably you need to go where those jobs are at.

I: Mm. Um, NAME, my next question, while you were a student at Ohio State, did your classes teach you about how to talk to consumers about agriculture?

P: Oh, boy, it’s been a long time. I don’t know that we specifically talked about it, but we may have.

I: Sure. Um, is there anything in particular you wish they had taught you about talking to consumers about agriculture?

P: Oh. I had lots of commu-- … I mean, I had lots of communication classes and so forth, but I don’t know if we spoke specifically about talking to people about agriculture. We talked about how to present a lot of things to consumers, private citizens, groups and so forth, but I can’t say that we talk----, I wasn’t in an ag communications class so I don’t if we talked specifically about that.

I: Mm-hm.

P: And it’s been too long for me to remember since then.

I: Oh, sure. Um, this is my ninth question, and, I mean, you kind of already touched on this, but I’ll go ahead and ask it. Is your current job in the agricultural field?

P: Of course it is.
I: [laughs] Can you explain what your connection to agriculture is in your job?

P: Yeah, I’m a, I’m with … What I work for the Natural Resources Conservation Service. We’re an agency within USDA that works with farmers in the soil and water offices to help provide assistance to producers to install and implement conservation practices, reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, wildlife habitat, um, those are the key things we do.

I: Um, good. What does a typical day look like for you?

P: Thirty years ago when I started, probably 70 to 80 percent of my time was outside, on the farm, with farmers and producers, working with them. Twenty to 25 percent of my time would’ve been spent in the office. That’s flipped today. Probably 80 percent or more of my time is spent staring at a computer monitor. Not nearly as much out on the land work as it was when I started. I’m still working with famers every day, and talking to them every day …

I: Mm-hm.

P: … But not nearly as much on their property as it would’ve been years ago.

I: Ok. Um, NAME, my next question, if you grew up with some experiences in agriculture, would you describe them as positive or negative, and why would you describe them that way?

P: Oh, very much positive. Um, it was something that I personally enjoyed, and it was done, for the most part, on our farm, with family members, my grandfather, my dad, my brothers, and for the most part, those, those experiences were fun, and the opportunities to be with family members you liked and wanted to be around.

I: Mm-hm. And did you have any other specific examples?

P: Uh, not particularly, no.

I: Ok, ok. Do you talk about agriculture with the people and consumers you interact with on a regular basis at work, or with people you see during the week?

P: [laughs] Yeah. Yes, pretty much every day.

I: Mm-hm. Um, how often do those conversations occur with, occur with consumers themselves?
P: Well that, probably not every day by any stretch of the imagination. More like, oh golly, three or four times a month with a consumer that would be a non-agricultural person.

I: Ok. Alright, um, NAME, if you talk with--about agriculture with consumers, and I know you said you didn’t talk a ton with consumers, you know, cause you’re working more with the farmers, um, but if so, what types of subjects related to agriculture typically come up in conversation?

P: Probably more for me because of the work that we do, the conservation issues, water quality, um, soil erosion, wildlife habitat, are uh, more of the center of our, my, conversations with consumers than specifics about what they stick in their mouth, if you know what I mean, in other words, food. On occasion, we’ll talk about GMOs. Probably, that would be the closest I get to talking about somebody’s steak or pork chop or whatever.

I: Mm-hm. Do you have any specific examples, or any other examples you want to share?

P: Um, most have been … I’ll, I’ll make them generic in that there are an awfully lot of people who are not agriculturally, uh, don’t have an understanding of production agriculture, or livestock agriculture, that are scared to death of GMOs. And, it takes an awful lot of effort to be able to, to even begin to get them to understand the science and the biology and so forth that goes along with GMOs. And I don’t know … Most of the time I don’t, I don’t feel successful with those kind of folks, that you’ve really accomplished a great deal. I think they’re just being respectful and not telling you you’re nuttier than fruitcake.

I: That is a, an interesting way of putting it. And if you talk with consumers about agriculture, do you usually initiate those conversations?

P: Typically no. Not with my job. Um, typically it’s some reason they’re coming here, and they may very well make a comment or have a question.

I: Mm-hm. Um …

P: Most of my job would not be to advocate in that direction. My job would be more to advocate for installation of conservation practices that keep soil on the land …

I: Mm-hm.

P: … Improve or at least protect water quality, or improve wildlife habitat, help farmers handle manure or something like that, as opposed to uh … My responsibilities typically
would not be to talk specifically, whether it’s GMOs, or that quality of food or that sort of thing.

I: Mm-hm. Ok, well, and that pretty much answers my next question, what was: if you don’t initiate these conversations, is there a reason why you don’t? So …

P: [laughs] That’s typically not my … If we’re talking about work, that’s typically not my part of the job.
I: Mm-hm. Um …

P: [sighs, like he’s about to speak]

I: Oh yeah, were you going to say something?

P: I was just gonna say, if, if I do bring it up and I muddy the water when I came to your house to talk to you about no-till farming or building a waterway or what we’re gonna do with your animal waste issues and manure, and I fire you up over … GMOs, although, typically, if I’m talking with a farmer, he’s, they’re going to be pro-GMOs. But if I’m having a conversation with someone about the soil erosion in their yard and they’re not a farmer, or water quality issues at a meeting or something, that typically, for me, would not be the place or the time for me to bring that up, at all, because that just kind of would take away from whatever real reason I was there, to talk about water quality or soil erosion or that sort of thing.

I: Mm-hm.

P: Um, as an individual, when I’m out and about, if someone wants to talk about it, usually I do. I can’t think of any specifics right now, it would’ve been quite a while since I’ve had that conversation just on a private level, but I’m sure I’ve had it.

I: Mm-hm. Um, and my next question is: do you talk about agriculture with people who mostly grew up in rural, urban or suburban areas?

P: Probably rural, 90 percent of the time, simply because, where I’m located at, western Ohio, is very much predominantly agriculture country.

I: Uh-hm. Um …

P: And I think you probably know that, cause I see a NAME phone number pop up on my phone so …

I: Mm-hm, mm-hm.
P: … NAME County must be home for you, or at least you’re here today.

I: [laughs] Yes, I’m from that area.

P: Ok.

I: The other question I have: so if you do talk about agriculture, how receptive is each group about talking about agriculture?

P: Come again, I’m sorry, I don’t catch all that.

I: No, you’re fine. If you do talk about agriculture, how receptive is each group, I mean, like talking to people from a rural area versus an urban area? Um … How receptive are they usually, to talk about agriculture?

P: Oh the ag---, the rural folks are, sometimes you can’t get away from them [laughs]. That’s their world, that’s their life, so in a sense it’s mine, so typically we’re both yakking away. Um, urban people, you know what? They’re very interested most of the time, they, if they have the time, they’re willing to listen, or at least have a conversation. Um, and it depends on the subject matter as to how well it’s received. I do not believe GMOs are received very well by the majority, or, in fact, it’s a relatively small minority that would be positive GM—in GMOs, if they don’t have an agriculture or a rural background.

I: Mm-hm.

P: Based on my experience.

I: And my next question, and again, if these are kind of repetitive, we, I mean, you can just skip over them. Um, or say, you know, not applicable, but do consumers ask you questions about agriculture? If so, what kinds of questions do they typically ask?

P: That really wouldn’t be applicable to me.

I: Ok, um … When people ask you questions, do you enjoy answering their questions about agriculture, or does it feel more like a chore?

P: No, no, it’s, for the most part, it’s enjoyable. Um, there may be individual instances where it’s no fun, um, but most of the time, it’s, it’s positive.

I: Mm-hm. Ok, um, my next question: do you feel qualified to answer questions about agriculture from the consumers around you?
P: Depends on what the questions are. If you’re asking me about water quality and manure, or wildlife habitat, and soil erosion, you bet. I’ve been doing it for 30 years.

I: Mm-hm.

P: If you ask me generically about GMOs, I can be decently a part of the conversation. If you go several questions deep, even though I’m a biologist, I’m not totally immersed in the science of GMOs, so I might not be nearly as strong or comfortable there. And if you ask me about um, food quality and the science behind a lot of those things, then I wouldn’t necessarily be qualified to talk about that. But if it’s green and grows in the ground or we, we feed it out, then I’m pretty comfortable about those things.

I: Mm-hm. Um, next, do you believe it’s important to talk to consumers about agriculture?

P: When the opportunity arises, you bet.

I: Ok, if so, why do you think it’s important?

P: Well, for a lot of the reasons I’ve been talking about for the last few minutes, when they aren’t educated and don’t know … use GMO again, there’s a whole lot of things, GMO just happens to be front and center of a lot of people’s minds right now, so I use that as an example. But when they don’t understand or have a grasp of … it’s not like we’re putting some weird chemical in an animal or a plant to come up with Roundup Ready plants or to come up with an animal that’s a little bit different. And uh, a lot of folks don’t understand that, they get the fear that we are doing something so different, the science is so scary that they are, they are immediately put off with it. And having that conversation, saying ‘whoa, whoa, whoa, wait a minute. That’s not what’s happening here. And we’re either removing or adding a gene that’s already been there, and that they’ve found in this plant.’ And a lot of people, just with Roundup Ready stuff alone, don’t realize that that resistance came from the very species of plant that we’re talking about. And sometimes that can make a difference in their attitude. Other times, I get the sense that it probably doesn’t.

I: Mm-hm.

P: So, that’s a long-winded answer, too.

I: No, no, you’re fine. Um, my next question: are there any messages or topics that you believe farmers or the agricultural community are not educating consumers about?

P: [sighs] They certainly have done better over the past few years. But, the cost to
produce a crop, whether it be livestock, raising livestock or whether it be raising corn or soybeans. The, um, weather conditions they have to deal with at times.

I: Mm-hm.

P: Um. This is kind of a factor, I don’t know if this is a direct answer to your question, but it’s something that certainly concerns me, and that is that producers don’t take the time to, to even know what consumers or non-agricultural people, what they don’t even know, what they think. They’re too busy milking cows, feeding hogs, sitting in a combine or whatever. Again, to their detriment, that can cause them a lot of issues. And that doesn’t mean I don’t realize the Farm Bureau, Farmers Union, they’re out there promoting those issues. I’m talking about you building a house on a 3-acre property down the road from my 500-acre farm, and that’s the first time you’ve been out in a rural area, and I come roaring down the road with a big old tank, spray tank, and don’t say nothing, don’t stop and introduce myself, don’t do anything. I’m just, unfold that dude and take off spraying, and you are scared spitless of what’s in that tank and what are you doing and so forth. And producers need to do more of that.

I: Mm.

P: So that’s kind of an answer to your question, but it’s also kind of getting around about in a different direction. We need to be better neighbors, how’s that?

I: Mm. I am writing that down … Well, and, the kind of follow up to that was, and I think you, it sounds like you already kind of addressed this, but: if yes, can you share what messages or topics about which they need to educate or dialogue with consumers?

P: How you farm, and what, what you’re doing, and hopefully be able to assure those folks that it’s not doing them harm. And in fact, in many, many cases, it’s got a positive outcome.

I: Mm-hm. Uh, my next question: in your opinion, what would be a good way for farmers to interact with or talk with consumers about agriculture?

P: [laughs] Gaw, oh, I don’t know. Probably the best methods are in small groups, whether it be in church or at things at school with their kids and things like that. That probably gets a, that’s a fairly small cross-section of people, however, um, uh … Certainly, uh, uh, we’ve got many different media outlets from Facebook to you name it, that probably will cut across the general population a lot better than just expecting it to be done in those smaller groups. But, in terms of quality conversation and having the ability to allow people to follow up with questions or you to follow up with answers after the initial question, probably small groups, in neighbors and communities would be the best way, although it’s probably not the most efficient.
I: Mm-hm. Um, we’re down to the 20th question out of 22, so you’re getting very close. Um, do you have any recommendations on how farmers, and again, you kind of, you talked on this already a little bit, but do you have any recommendations on how farmers could reach out to people who are not directly connected to agriculture?

P: Well, some of the things that I’ve seen agricultural groups, whether it be Farm Bureau, or individual farmers, or young farmers groups, like going into grocery stores, and, literally, talking to the consumer right where they’re purchasing the product. It’s probably a good thing. And again, it’s probably not cutting across a wide enough swath of society to have a huge impact, but anything face-to-face like that has a much better chance of being successful and informing consumers of how things are raised, and what they’re eating, and its quality and so forth, it’s much better off if it’s face-to-face, so getting in grocery stores, getting in different parts where we have … Getting where we can get where there’s a fairly large group, then, you bet. Um, and, uh, certainly on the Internet, certainly Facebook, Twitter, those sort of things. Uh, any, you’re gonna get a heck of a bigger cross-section of people that, that will at least see it, whatever your piece of information is.

I: Um, my next question is: what do you believe is the greatest obstacle for farmers interacting with consumers who are no longer directly connected to agriculture?

P: Uh, probably, uh, the lack of knowledge on the consumers’ part. And way too damn much independence on the farmer’s part.

I: Did you say independence?

P: Pardon me? Independence. ‘I don’t have time to do that, I milk cows.’ That’s just my perception of some. And there are some who do an excellent job.

P: … That have the communication skills and the willingness to get out there. They see the need and they do an extremely good job. There’s just not enough of them doing that. And when I talk to guys, most of them, they want to talk about milking cows, what kind of sh, sheep should they put in the ground this year, and they don’t, producers don’t see it … as an immediate need. And again, I realize some are, especially over the last few years. Consumers, on the flip side, need to be responsible for, and some of them are, obviously, um. The organic movement, whether you’re pro or con, or you don’t care about organic, it’s probably helped consumers get a little bit more educated. I don’t, I may not always agree with their attitudes, but at least somebody’s talking to them, or they are doing their homework a little bit, on the quality of their food. If they’re honest with themselves, by starting to do that, I would hope that they would see that they have the safest, the least expensive, uh, and highest quality and quantity of food of anywhere on the planet. And that would be my goal, I guess, if I were king, would be my tips to
getting information across to consumers, that they see those, those … cause that doesn’t mean we’re perfect in agriculture. And some days, shame on us, but for the most part, following the success of our country over the last 200 years, has an awful lot to do with us being able to produce safe, large quantities, high-quality food. And it’s kept us out of wars and a whole host of other things that, that not even farmers realize, some of the … When we produce to the excesses we’ve had, and we’ve fed an awful lot of the rest of the world who were pretty hungry, I suspect that’s kept us out of a lot of political situations we’d have otherwise been in, so … Again, I kind of got off subject there, but …

I: You’re fine. Um, NAME, this, my last question is: is there anything I didn’t ask about that you wanted to add?

P: Nah. You did good.

I: [laughs] I have a few follow-ups. How long have you worked for USDA?

P: Thirty years, just a little over 30 years.

I: What locations have you worked in?

P: Um, I’m here in NAME County [western Ohio], I spent a little time in NAME County, uh, working. I’ve worked in Greene County, Erie County, Adams County. Uh … I’ve spent time in Logan, Mercer, uh, Champaign, but as far as assignments, those first four or five were where I was assigned permanently.

I: Wow.

P: Spent the last 22 years here in NAME County.

I: Ok. And then, so you, and you don’t farm in NAME County, right?

P: No, that’s correct. I live on my father-in-law’s farm, but I don’t do the farming.

I: Ok. I think that’s everything I needed, let me go ahead and close, and there was nothing else you wanted to mention, NAME?

P: No. No, I’m good, thank you.
Transcript of Interview with Participant 5 on Wednesday, February 25, 2015, at 2:07 p.m. I already read her the verbal script.

I: Ok, NAME, it is 2:07 on Wednesday, and I am recording. So, um, and NAME, I did want to start with the demographic questions. So, first of all, what is your occupation or job title?

P: Well, right now, I’m retired from teaching agriculture education, for, I had a total of 30 years of teaching.

I: Oh, wow.

P: And, yeah, and previous to that, I worked for the OARDC/OSU Research branch, the western branch in South, South Charleston, Ohio. It’s now called Western Agricultural Research Station.

I: And how long did you work there?

P: And … I worked there two years, and then the last 28 years I taught school, so a total of 30 years, in ag.

I: Did you teach in one school, or a few schools, or where did you teach?

P: Um, I started at Northeastern, and well, I had NAME as one of my first jobs in Galion, but then I came to NAME and ended up at NAME. They’re both in NAME County, in NAME, Ohio.

I: Very good. So where do you live right now, NAME?

P: We live in NAME, which is … DISTANCE miles west of Columbus.

I: Ok. And where do you live now? Do you live in a house, in an apartment, a farmhouse, a condo? What’s the setting?

P: Ok, we live in a rural community. We live out in the country. We own our own house, it’s a ranch. And it’s on the land, which is formerly my husband’s father’s, who farmed it for all his life, and he’s now 90 years old.

I: Oh, wow.

P: But we own a portion of it, and behind there, other people farm the land now. My father-in-law can’t, so we’ve been around agriculture a lot.
I: Oh, sure. And NAME, how old are you?

P: I just turned 60.

I: Oh, and what was your major and minor in during college at Ohio State?

P: Ok, I got a B.S. in agriculture in 1978, and then I went to work, my minor was animal science. Went to work at the research station for two years, and then I decided I wanted to teach.

I: Mm.

P: So I went back a year for my master’s, and I got it in agriculture education, and I’ll get certified in ag ed, and then got my master’s in ’91 in ag education and supervision.

I: Fantastic. Ok.

P: Thank you.

I: Um, that was actually, so you told me what years, and then my, my other demographic question was: did you return to Ohio State for graduate work, if so, what did you major in, and when did you graduate? So …

P: Yes, yup.

I: You gave me that, ok. And you graduated in ’91 with your master’s, is that right?

P: Yes, right. Mm-hm. While I was teaching at Northeastern, I went back and forth, back and forth, you know, to get my master’s in the evening. So, you only had six years to do it,

I: Right …

P: … And it took me the six years to do it while teaching, so, I was really happy to, get that.

I: Oh, definitely, no, that’s a great accomplishment, especially while you’re teaching. That’s a lot of work [laughs].

P: Thank you, you know how that is [laughs].

I: Yes. Well, NAME, I’ll go ahead and start with my first question.
P: Ok.

I: To begin, where did you grow up?

P: I grew up in Huron County, which is northeastern Ohio, and my hometown was New London, Ohio.

I: Did you have any connection to agriculture growing up?

P: Yes. Family members had Hereford cattle, and I always was around animals, and so that’s why I wanted to go to Ohio State originally in pre-vet because, uh, you know, I wanted to be a veterinarian, but I ended up with my animal science degree …

I: Very good.

P: … After all.

I: And the next question is: if you grew up in a rural community, did you live on a grain farm or a farm where livestock was raised?

P: I did not live on a farm, I lived in town, but I always had the love of going out to the country, where all the family members, you know, had their animals and such. So …

I: Oh sure. Um, next question is: what were the occupations of your parents?

P: My mom was a teacher …

I: Mm-hm.

P: … And my dad inter--, my dad a [laughs], my father was a mechanic, as well as a Buick dealership owner, co-owner with his father.

I: Oh, very good.

P: … In this same little town.

I: Um, and S--, these next few questions, I’ll go ahead and read them, but we can probably skip them because they’re kind of like ‘If you grew up on a farm …’ so, um …

P: Yeah.

I: So I’ll go ahead and read these … Um. It’s, the fifth one is: if you grew up on a farm,
after graduating from Ohio State, did you end up returning to the rural community where you grew up, or did you move somewhere else? Um …

P: I moved somewhere else, down here in NAME, and met NAME at the same place, my husband. He worked in agronomy and I worked with the pigs.

I: Where did you guys end up meeting?

P: And, uh … Oh, on break! Every break at 10, noon and 3 o’clock. We’d take other breaks. There were only five people working there. And, I was the animal science person, the other guys were in agronomy, and there were a couple of other hog people. And so, um, I started there in May of 1978, I graduated in March of 1978 from Ohio State …

I: Mm-hm.

P: … With my B.S., and went down there and started working. We didn’t really officially start dating until October, and then a year later, we got married.

I: Oh, that’s great.

P: So, yep. So, we have a lot in common – you know, agriculture isn’t a common bound, bond.

I: Um, and my next question is, again: if you grew up on a farm, did you think of returning to work on the farm you grew up on, or by starting your own farm? Um …

P: No, I just decided to work at a hog farm and grain farm, the research farm down here in NAME. And it’s called, well, at that time from ’78 through ’80, when I worked there, it was called O-A-R-D-C. Ohio Ag Research and Development Center.

I: Sure. Um, NAME, my next question is: what do you think is the main reason students do not move back to a rural community after graduating from a college like Ohio State?

P: Well, they’ve been out a while, and they see the opportunities that are out there for them. The little small town probably doesn’t have any opportunities, except work at the little grocery store, or, you know, just typical little jobs like that, where, after you go to college and after you have opportunities thrown at you, and invitations to go here and there. You see what is out there, and your—my eyes were opened. And I, I knew I could do work, so I moved two and a half hours away [laughs]. So, I think that’s what’s happening to a lot of the students, unless their dads and moms has a huge farm that they are, they know they are going to go back to. But I didn’t have that opportunity, and I, I was just glad I was able to go on to Ohio State and move on with my career.
I: Um, the next question is: while you were a student at Ohio State, did your classes teach you about how to talk to consumers about agriculture?

P: Yes, we had some agriculture economic classes and other um, rural sociology classes at that time, that really helped us see the need and the benefits of talking to people about agriculture or commodities, but that course was like in the 70s so things have changed since then. But, um, you know, yes, they helped us keep up on the current things at the time when I was at college.

I: And, NAME, my next question after that is: if yes, what did you learn?

P: What did I learn from … Can you be a little more specific?

I: Yeah, um, when they were talking to you, and you kind of touched on this, but um, about talking to consumers about agriculture, was there anything in particular that stood out to you?

P: Oh, just that, um, sometimes, in the new things that we learned with our economics classes, a lot of people were really surprised at ‘Oh, that’s the trend,’ um. You know, so, I felt good that I was sharing with them some current items at that time, you know, and they were thankful, I guess, I shared it with them. I can’t remember specifics at that time. But um, I think the more we talk about the things, like the GMOs, and all the things now that are going on, it really opens people’s eyes.

I: MM-hm.

P: Um, the reason why I’m talking about that is, last night, I also am involved as a judge for the FFA contest in the counties and the districts. Because I’m a former ag teacher, I can do that, you know [laughs]. So we had a contest last night, and the students are just amazing, with all the information they’ve researched. I did public speaking with them, prepared … And so, yeah, they even opened my eyes to some new things that are going on today. I just wanted to throw that in.

I: Oh, sure. No, I’m glad you did. Um, and NAME, my next question: is your current job in the agriculture field?

NAME: Ok. Um, I’m retired from high school teaching, but, the last three fall semesters, I have been teaching at NAME State Community College …

I: Mm.

P: … Agriculture department. Yeah. And I’ve been teaching three classes. Two classes of
soil science, and one class of animal science, right down my road so I’m … It was my choice. I’m so happy, to do that cause I did not want to go back to subbing, you know. So, um, yeah, I really enjoy, again, sharing current ideas with the people, and we have great discussions in my classes. And, dealing with soils, we also cover, you know, the needs of the best way to plant, plant, plants for better yields and food and such like that.

I: Mm-hm.

P: So, that’s why I do it. It’s great. I love it.

I: Oh, good. And, NAME, my next question: do you talk about agriculture with the people and consumers you interact with on a regular basis at work or with people you see during the week?

P: Yes. Like I said, in the fall, um, there’s 16 weeks of classes so I’m constantly there, I am, ok. Um, my daughter currently teaches vo-ag out in Missouri, and we share ideas a lot with each other on current things going on in agriculture. And I was able to visit her last week for a couple of days and observe her teaching, I’m so proud of her. And um, and my, her husband, also, is in agriculture, and he is a Syngenta seed salesman, so we do talk a lot about agriculture, all the time. Of course, my husband is going to a presentation tonight where there’s going to be agriculture people. He, he’s involved in things. I really think it’s great, you know, that we are involved in stuff like this, so we can keep up on what’s going on in the field of ag.

I: Mm-hm. Uh, and NAME, the question after that is: if yes, how often do these conversations occur, with consumers?

P: I’d say probably weekly at least, you know. Because even though I’m not teaching at NAME State here this spring semester, um, I meet with other people, and um, you know, we talk about things, like we get together once a month with a group of retired people, and a couple of them are ag people, so we always talk, and then, I’m always chatting with them off-line or something. Mm-hm, I’d say weekly.

I: Good. The next question is: if you talk with, or excuse me, if you talk about agriculture with consumers, what types of subjects related to agriculture typically come up in conversation?

P: Well, a lot of these genetically modified organisms and such, GMOs that people are using. There’s such a controversy between some of the people that really don’t understand what’s going on with that, so I listen a lot and then I voice my opinion, how I feel about things, and um, that’s one of the big things. And then all of the, um, oh, I’m trying to think, well, with animals, you’ve got to prepare things, and in these restaurants,
you’ve got to watch out, because sometimes, although I just hate to say, sometimes they don’t look at the dated food supply and they mix it in with the undated food supply, or the outdated food supply. And that’s not fair to the consumers. And then, when I go to the stores, I always make sure I look at the color of the meat, look at the date of things, so I’m aware of the things that are going on, you know, and I, just share with my husband, or other friends that I talk with, and they share ideas they’ve come up with, too. So, I guess, just, that’s about all I do, you know, when anything comes up, you talk about it.

I: Oh sure. Um …

P: Oh, and I’m also a 4-H leader, and I’ve done that for 32 years, so again, with our club, we talk about certain things. We have an activity every time we meet, once a month, so I always like to share food things or an agriculture item with them.

I: Mm-hm. My next question is: if you talk with consumers about agriculture, do you usually initiate these conversations?

[Phone call dropped so the interviewer called the participant back.]

P: Hi, yes.

I: The question 13, if you talk with consumers about agriculture, do you usually initiate these conversations?

P: Um, it’s sort of 50/50, you know. It depends on the crowd that I’m with. And, um, you know, it’s, it’s usually 50/50, you know. I, I don’t mind initiating things, but it depends on what it is, and what the topic is, or if I feel the need to continue talking about things like that, or even bring it up. So, it’s a 50/50 thing, pretty much. Um, yeah.

I: Um, my next question after that is: if yes, why do you choose to initiate them?

P: Mm-hm. Um, why I choose, because I feel a need and I want to know: how do you guys feel about this? What’s your involvement in the topic I’m dealing with at the time, you know.

I: Mm-hm.

P: Um, so, that’s, that’s my interest is, you know, I read something about it that day so I want to get their opinion on it, you know.

I: And the next kind of sub-question that I have: if you do initiate these conversations, are people usually pretty receptive to talking about agriculture?
P: Yes, because, again, um, most of our friends know that we’re involved in agriculture, and most of them are involved in agriculture, either the husband or the wife, you know. And, um, our kids all grew up together, so it’s the group we just sort of hang with, so, they’re pretty open to, you know, pretty much anything, I’d say. So, I don’t come off as harsh with it or as though this is the only way you can do this. So, um, it’s a really nice calm initiation whenever I get a chance.

I: And you kind of already touched on this, but I’ll go ahead and ask the question, um, did you …

P: Ok [laughs].

I: [laughs] There’s been a lot of that, it’s interesting see, you know, with the different interviews. Um, do you talk about agriculture with mostly people who grew up in rural or urban or suburban areas?

P: Um, depends again, because, at the fair, we’re there for a whole week in the summertime, and, all those people are mainly agriculture. But I do have friends that are non-agriculture, and we do share some things. Now, where it gets interesting is, um, I have this one friend, she’s vegan, so, if they’re ever over at our house, I have to make sure there’s some non-meat thing for her to eat, you know? And um, she was at our daughter’s wedding a year and a half ago, same thing, we had to have a vegan plate for her and someone else. But um, I really accommodate people, you know, to not make them feel out of place cause I do talk about agriculture, and they’re pretty receptive, which is really nice, you know. I think that’s a good thing. That’s always … You know, they’ve known me so long, and I’ve, I’ve known … They’ve known I’ve been in agriculture practically all my life. You know, we’re just good friends, and it’s, it’s a good thing. And even if I don’t know the person, I can talk to them about agriculture.

I: Mm-hm.

P: As long as it’s in a related area or something like that, so … So far it works out pretty good! I, and if it would get, you know, if it would get sort of testy, and they seem sort of upset about things, if it would happen, I would know to back off, you know. So, it’s never really happened, but you know, I would just not pursue anything that would be upsetting. I’m not one of those that ‘You have to do it this way, or else,’ you know?

I: Mm-hm.

P: So, it’s worked out great so far.

I: Good. Um, the next question is: do consumers ask you questions about agriculture, and
if so, what kinds of questions do they ask?

P: Um, yes, some people have asked, ‘Oh, what’s new?’ cause they know I talk about soils. ‘Is there anything new in soils that you’re doing’ or ‘How are your classes going?’ And then I share things with them about my animal science class or my soils class or any … I also taught a marketing class at one time, and we shared the international and, you know, American, um, marketing situation. And so that was a real interesting class a couple of years ago. So, um, yeah, we shared labeling, ‘where do you go in the marketplace to look for certain types of commodities?’ And also, you’ve been in Kroger and places like that, there’s certain areas that are just for the culture, and so we made sure that students were able to find those, and then we got back to class the next day and talked about it, you know. That was a real interesting semester [laughs]. We talked about that.

I: Oh sure.

P: Mm-hm.

I: Um, and NAME, I can kind of hear when you’re talking, but I’ll go ahead and ask this question anyway. Um, how do you …

SH: That’s fine. I keep going on …

I: [laughs] No, I so appreciate you doing this.

P: Uh-hm.

I: How do consumers respond when they ask you questions? And do you enjoy answering their questions, or does it feel more like a chore?

P: Um, when they ask me questions, um, I feel free to ask them. If I would not know the answers, I would say, ‘I certainly can find out for you,’ because I’m not one to fake people out. And even with my students, if they’ve asked me something, and I wasn’t sure, I said I’ll look it up and get back with you tomorrow. And they seemed really receptive to it. Um, if I know the answer, people listen to me, and then they share their ideas or whatever is on their mind at the time.

I: Mm-hm. Um, the next question: do you feel qualified to answer questions about agriculture from the consumers around you?

P: Yes, pretty much. I, you know, I don’t know everything, but, um, on my topic, I do feel pretty good at what I’m talking about. And like I said, if I don’t know, um, anything
about it, I would say, ‘Oh, I’m sorry, I don’t know anything about that right now, but I will let you know if I can find the information.’

I: Mm-hm.

P: … And that’s usually how I handle it. And they’re, they’re pretty receptive about it. So, it, it doesn’t happen all the time, you know, that I don’t know anything, but if I don’t, I would gladly take time to get back with them and find the answer.

I: Um, my next question, is: do you believe it’s important to talk to consumers about agriculture?

P: Definitely, because again, like you said at the beginning, if we don’t have farming, if we don’t have livestock, who’s going to produce our food? I know there’s some synthetic things that are made right now, ok, but, um, I feel very comfortable talking about agriculture to people, um. And I think people do like to talk about it once they feel that someone is interested in sharing the ideas of the farmer.

I: Mm-hm.

P: So, I, I feel comfortable talking about it, about it.

I: Um, and that actually kind of answers my next quest—sub-question, which was: if so, why do you think it’s important? And then, can you give me any examples of conversations you’ve had with consumers that lead you to believe whether or not talking about agriculture is important?

P: Yes, um. Most people talk about GMOs, they don’t really realize that it’s ok, some of these things that are genetically modified are good for the consumer, but I realize, um, some people are uneducated about this stuff, so that’s why I feel I can share with them what I know about those things. And even per … Let’s see, oh, I’m trying to think of something else, I think I know … Um, uh, it went out of my mind, I can’t think of it right now. You know, some people can’t eat certain things, like with wheat in it and such …

I: Mm-hm.

P: Um, gluten, that’s what it is. Gluten-free. Because there is a disease people can get, if they have too much gluten in their food, ok. And, so therefore, they have to have the gluten free, and there’s laws on everything has to be labeled gluten, or gluten-free, so I made sure people are aware of those types of things, too.

I: Mm-hm.
P: So, I hope I helped you on that one.

I: No, that sounds good. Um, my next question: are there any messages or topics that you feel farmers or the agricultural community are not educating consumers about?

P: Um, no, I think the media has, sometimes has a one-sided effect on how the, uh, messages go out to people, you know. And farmers need to find actual Farm Bureaus or other people that are actually educated, the Extension people always, are always up on certain things, they need to make sure all the local farmers or agriculturists are aware of the new things that are going on, or the current activities in agriculture. I can’t think of any one special thing right now, but I’m also involved, like I said, in Extension, the fairs, 4-H, FFA, so, and especially teaching ag, I try to keep up on everything I possibly can, related to my field. And so, if we see farmers or the older students in my classes at Clark State, we always share ideas, and they’re appreciative of the new things, and they, they share it with their family, you know like, soil surveys. You can get everything online right now so I had everyone post their home site, and they shared, you know, the types of photos they had with their family members, ‘This is really neat!’ So I felt, you know, they can grow better crops by liming certain things or by adding certain things to their soil, and so, therefore, you know, that type of thing I think I bring across to the consumer, or the people involved in ag.

I: Mm-hm.

P: Mm-hm.

I: Um, my next one after that was, and you kind of talked on this, was: if yes, can you share what messages or topics about which they need to educate or dialogue with consumers?

P: A message or topic they need to dialogue with consumers, is that what you said?

I: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

P: Oh goodness, I can’t think right now. Can we come back to that one?

I: Sure.

P: Ok, circle that one.

I: Ok, I did [laughs]. Um, in your opinion, what would be a good way for farmers to interact with or talk with consumers about agriculture?
P: I think if they attend meetings, like Extension meetings, or Farm Bureau meetings, or any type of ag conferences, then they can be put as a speaker for a few minutes and share what’s new with them or what they felt hasn’t worked. So, I think by getting more visible with the community, these farmers can share their thoughts and needs of the community.

I: Mm.

P: Mm-hm.

I: Um, and my follow up to that was: can you share specific examples, but I feel like you did …

SH: Ok, thank you ([laughs]).

I: Um, do you have any recommendations on how farmers could reach out to people who are not directly connected to agriculture?

P: Um, again, let’s see. Like I say, the, um, our farm, we belong to the Farm Bureau and we had a meeting, oh, a couple of weeks ago, so we just met, and we had fliers, we have things posted on Facebook and other virtual media, to help people be more aware of the opportunities out there for them.

I: Mm.

P: You know, neat things, if you need information, the soil service can come out and help you, just on [unsure, hard to hear] waterways, to make sure your soil is up to par for growing things. So, I think, you know, just being in these meetings, and ask to be aware of … Maybe talk to the Kiwanis Clubs or the Rotary Clubs. They do have a soil and farmer day in our local Kiwanis Club, and when I taught ag, we’d take the FFA students up there for the day for the luncheon.

I: Oh.

P: And, people would share ideas, and that was a most wonderful time, so that’s a wonderful example I always remember. And, they’d always have a wonderful uh, farmer speak, you know, have a good speaker, somebody really into agriculture. That was, just a great time, so … We always looked forward to that. And that guy was a local farmer, or, you know, somebody close to the area, that can share things about agriculture. That was the best. Mm-hm.

I: My next question is: what do you believe is the greatest obstacle for farmers interacting with consumers who are no longer directly connected to agriculture?
P: Alright, the greatest obstacle is, you know, like, I guess the average farmer age might be 40 to 55 now. Um, a lot of the younger people, unless their farmland is still owned by the father, are not going into the home farm situation, ok? It’s just, it’s not, um, money is not there, available for them to start, like it used to be when their grandfathers had the farm and such. So, I think the obstacle is, to change people’s minds on the new equipment, on the, um, new GPSs that are being used now that old farmers didn’t use. You know, they don’t want to change their ways, we talked about this last night at the public speaking contest, too. A lot of the students were sharing their ideas. It’s just really hard for the older farmers, the older agriculture people, to change their minds to the new stuff coming out. Like biotechnology. They have no clue what it is, you know, maybe they need to be educated. But, they’ll so set in their own ways, they don’t want to change sometimes. Nothing wrong with that, you know, but … Well, I hope I helped you on that question.

I: No, it did. And, NAME, is there anything I didn’t ask about that you wanted to add?

P: Um, I think you really covered those questions on your interview here. You did well.

I: Oh, thank you. And I do want to make sure we go back to 18, if you thought of anything, which was: are there any messages or topics that you believe that farmers or the agricultural community are not educating consumers about?

P: I think they’re trying their hardest on everything. I cannot really pinpoint to one specific thing. I think it’s out there, it’s just that people need to open up to learn some of this new information. You know, they need to be willing to listen to the farmers or listen to the new agriculturists, and such. And, I cannot really pinpoint one little thing, but it’s out there. They just need to want to learn more about it, you know?

I: Mm-hm.

P: Yeah. So.

I: Well, NAME, is there anything else you wanted to add?

P: Um, no, I’ve just loved, well, I’ve loved agriculture. I intend to continue to support my daughter teaching agriculture, continue working at NAME State in the agriculture department …

I: Mm-hm.

P: … My husband’s also retired from agronomy, and um, but we do have so many friends. And, um, you know, being in Farm Bureau, 4-H and Extension, and such, it
keeps us really up on most of the new things that are coming out, I think, so I’m really happy to have been a part of this, this field.

I: Mm-hm.

P: So, I appreciate you asking me to be a part of your, your little survey today.

I: Oh, no, NAME, thank you so … [Tape ends.]
Transcript of Interview with Participant 6 on Thursday, February 26, 2015, at 10:06 a.m. I already read him the verbal script.

I: Ok, NAME, I’m recording, and it is 10:06 on Thursday, February 26. First, I just wanted to start by asking you—and can you hear me ok?

P: Yes, I just put you on speaker on my end, too, so.

I: Oh good, ok. Um, so, first I wanted to start off by asking you some demographic questions. And my first one is: what is your occupation or job title?

P: Well, I’m a business owner, currently, uh, retired from the education.

I: Mm. What is your business?

P: Uh, my wife and I have a bed and breakfast.

I: Very neat.

P: Mm-hm.

I: Where do you live?

P: Uh, in NAME, Ohio, just outside of NAME, in NAME County.

I: Ok. Um, so, NAME, if you could describe, I mean, where you live. Do you live in a house, an apartment, a condo?

P: Uh, we live in a house, uh, built in 1900.

I: Wow. So, are you in a suburb or the country … In the …

P: Uh, it’s a small, rural community of about 1,800 people.

I: Ok. And then, my next question is: how old are you?

P: 67.

I: Very good. And then what was your major and minor in during college at Ohio State?

P: Uh, I was, had a dual major in ag education and agronomy.
I: And then, my next question was: did you return to – oh, what year did you graduate from Ohio State?

P: Oh, yes, I’m sorry. I knew there was two parts to that question.

I: No, you’re fine.


I: And, you didn’t have a minor when you were there, right?

P: Uh, no, it was, it was two majors. I actually, uh, spent an extra quarter and got two majors, in agronomy and ag ed.

I: Wow, good for you. That would be a lot of work [laughs].

P: [laughs]

I: Uh, and NAME, my last kind of demographic question is: did you return to Ohio State for graduate work?

P: Yes, I did.

I: Oh. If so, what did you major in and when did you graduate?


I: Oh wow. So, it was in ag education, is that right?

P: Uh, yes, that was, it was, oh I guess they … Ag education was a part of, at the master’s level, was a, a part of a program in vocational and technical education, to work in the career centers throughout Ohio, if you’re familiar with those …

I: Oh sure.

P: … High school programs. Yeah.

I: Very good. And I’m so sorry, J--. So was it in vocational, like was that your …

P: Yes, yes. Uh, vocational administration, actually. I was planning on going into, uh, and
did, spend most of my career in uh, administration in a vocational center.

I: Oh, good for you. Which one?

P: Uh, NAME County, uh, in NAME.

I: Very good. Well, NAME, that kind of helps give me some background …

P: Sure.

I: … So, I’ll go ahead and get started with the first question. Um, to begin, where did you grow up?

P: In Brown County, Ohio, east of Cincinnati, in a little town called Georgetown.

I: Very good. Did you have any connection to agriculture growing up?

P: Oh yes. I grew up on a farm.

I: Ok. Um, if you grew up in a rural community, did you live on a grain farm or a farm where livestock was raised?

P: Uh, both. Uh, it was a general farm at that point. Early on, we had dairy and hogs and cattle, and raised crops, including tobacco, corn and soybeans.

I: Very good. Uh, how many acres was your farm?

P: Uh, actually, there were two, uh, separate tracts. One of them was my grandfather’s farm of about 100 acres, and uh, later on, Dad purchased a farm up the road a little, about 3 miles. And there was about 250 acres in that tract.

I: Oh sure. And NAME…

P: … Part of that, uh …

I: Oh, go ahead.

P: Part of that tract, of the 250 that Dad purchased later, uh, included about well, an additional 90 acres that was eventually, while I was in middle school, turned into a golf course.

I: Oh.
P: That’s why I went into agronomy when I went to uh, Ohio State, in turf management.

I: Oh. Did you end up doing that?

JW: Well, I went during the summers, and uh, in high school and college, I of course went back home and worked on the golf course and uh … And, uh, but I … After graduating in ag education, I was able to get a teaching position and, uh, went that route. And I still worked a little bit … One of the first couple years I was teaching, was near, uh, Mom and Dad’s golf course, so I still worked there, some, but I was mostly teaching.

I: Where did you teach?

P: Uh, well, the first couple years was in Brown County, a couple small districts there. Um, and then I moved to Lancaster, uh, Bloom-Carroll High School near Lancaster, outside of Columbus …

I: Mm-hm.

P: … And, uh, while I was working on my master’s degree. And then, uh, couple of years after I received it is when I got the opportunity to come to NAME County and stayed in administration and uh, retired from there in 2001. And uh, since then, I worked for five years after that at, uh, NAME State Community College, in uh, marketing training programs.

I: Hm.

P: And then, uh, five or six years after that, I worked, uh, for the Nehemiah Foundation, which is a, a, community organization in NAME that uh, got some grants to work, uh, with elementary kids in, uh, kind of community and parent involvement, with the schools.

I: Hm. It sounds like you’ve done a lot of things.

P: [laughs] Yeah.

I: Wow. Well, and NAME, I think you answered my next question, which was: can you share some details about your upbringing, such as how many acres your family’s farm consisted of and what they raised specifically … Uh … And I think you really touched on that. And what kind of, did you say you had livestock?

P: Yes, we uh, we raised a lot of hogs.
I: Mm.

P: … In high, while I was at home. And after that, too, we raised hogs, and I had, our kids had 4-H projects, and we raised a lot of pigs, for, I think, about 20 years while the kids were in 4-H [laughs].

I: Wow. That’s great. Uh, my next question, NAME, is: what were the occupations of your parents?

P: Uh, my mom was a homemaker, basically. Dad was a farmer and an insurance agent.

I: Oh. Very neat. Uh, my next question is: if you grew up on a farm, after graduating from Ohio State, did you end up returning to the rural community where you grew up, or did you move somewhere else?

P: Uh, I returned to the home community for two years.

I: Mm-hm. Ok. And my next question: if you grew up on a farm, did you ever think of returning to work on the farm you grew up on, or by starting your own farm?

P: Uh, yes, I thought about it. Had an opportunity, but uh, the teaching position was more, I guess, of a possibility at that that point. And, uh, we did own five acres when our kids were growing up. Um, up here in NAME County where we live now.

I: Mm-hm.

P: And where we could have livestock for the kids, and 4-H, and that kind of thing.

I: Oh sure. Um, um, well, the kind of sub-question of that was: if you did move away after graduation, what kept you from returning to that rural community? Um, but, I, uh, you probably … I feel like you kind of answered that already. Um.

P: Ok. Yeah, job opportunity, that I taught in the home community pretty much there, or within the county, for two years after graduating, so I didn’t, yeah.

I: So, after that, is that when you moved to do your master’s and go to Lancaster?

P: Yes.

I: Ok.

P: Right, right.
I: Um, and then, my next question is: what do you think is the main reason students do not move back to a rural community after graduating from a college like Ohio State?

P: Probably job opportunities.

I: Mm-hm.

P: Probably are pretty limited to your, um, family farm, or you know, you marry into a farm situation.

I: Mm-hm.

P: It wasn’t our, our current home situation wasn’t big enough to support, you know, two or three families, and uh, so that’s what limited my opportunity there, I guess. Uh, but that’s, same story for a lot of kids I guess who go to Ohio State and finish with a degree. There’s, uh, you have to have an awfully large family farm operation in order to be able to return home.

I: Mm-hm. Did you have any siblings that returned home to help with the farm?

P: Uh, yes, I had a younger sister and a younger brother. My sister went to school, and she wasn’t interested in the farm situation, but my younger brother did a little bit on the farm, but he got involved heavily with the golf course operation.

I: Oh. Does your family own the golf course?

P: Uh, no, it was … Uh, we did, up until about, oh, four or five years ago, and uh, after my dad passed away …

I: Oh.

P: … NAME, my brother, had been running it for a number of years, and uh, it was sold about three or four years ago.

I: Oh, ok. My next question is: is your current job in the agricultural field?

P: Uh, no, not currently. Uh, hospitality, I guess, with the bed and breakfast at this point.

I: Mm-hm.

P: But it’s in a small rural community, and uh, we know, agriculture’s all around us right
here, but I’m not involved in working in it, at this time.

I: Sure. Uh, if you grew up with some experiences in agriculture, would you describe them as positive or negative, and why would you describe them that way?

P: Oh, I’d say they were very positive. Uh, um, and why, I guess, I was fortunate to have good opportunities, uh, came my way with my teaching career in agriculture, and then in administration, and uh, involvement with 4-H as the kids grew up. I was able to kind of dabble in it a little bit along the way, but in most recent years, kind of, moved away from it a little bit, just because of, uh, you know, other opportunities with our business and that kind of thing.

I: Mm-hm. How many kids do you guys have?

P: Uh, we have three. Two boys and a girl.

I: Aw. Good for you. Um, and then my next question is: do you talk about agriculture with the people and consumers you interact with on a regular basis at work or with people you see during the week?

P: Oh, yes, all the time. Um, primarily, uh, with a lot of visitors, or guests, that we have at the bed and breakfast. Since it’s such a small town, the grain elevator is about a block and, or, and a half away from us, and they have trains come in all the time to pick up grain, and there’s, you know, train whistles blow at all hours of the day and night …

I: Yeah.

P: … And we have industry people, we have a couple of big feedlots and dairy operations in the area that have a lot of guests come, from, actually, from all over the world, and uh, stay with us, and uh, I interact with the, the veterinarians who come and buyers and all that kind of thing, and we talk a lot of … As soon as I get an opportunity, I mention to them that I’m a former ag teacher, and uh, we get to talk a little farm stuff along the way, so it’s, it’s, uh, it’s a lot of fun.

I: Good. And uh, my next question is: if you talk about agriculture with consumers, what types of subjects typically related to agriculture come up in conversation?

P: Oh, um. I guess ours is more, well, about the livestock industry and grain, uh, because of the trains that are coming in, and this feedlot and dairy operation that’s pretty close to us, you know, we end up talking a little bit, as far as consumers go, about the, the costs of things, and uh, the farmers have to purchase, and uh …
I: MM-hm.

P: … And the, the pretty high tech industry that’s involved with this feedlot and embryo transplant center, that’s uh, very near us.

I: Mm-hm. Uh, my next question, um, is: if you talk with consumers about agriculture, do you usually initiate those conversations?

P: Uh, generally, people have a question about, you know, who comes to NAME? You know, it’s such a small rural community. And uh, um, so we talk a little bit about the size of the town and uh, you know, the grain elevator’s here, and the, um, the industry that’s in the area is all tied pretty heavily to agriculture, and uh, so it gives me kind of a little chance to kind of share that that’s, that’s the industry of the area and people are coming here, you know, for those reasons, as well as to get out of the big cities and come and uh, you know, get a, kind of a little quiet time away, um, from the hustle and bustle of the more urban areas.

I: Mm-hm. Um, so, following that question. Uh, the conversation is—well, if you choose to initiate conversations, why do you choose to initiate them, and then, if so, are people usually pretty receptive to talking about agriculture?

P: Um, yeah, they’re, they’re interested in it. A lot of them have uh, limited experiences, but yet they seem interested in it, and uh, you know, because of the variety and the, the, the size, people comment about how big the cornfields are around here [laughs]. And uh, how flat the land is, and uh, you know, if they hear the train whistle in the night or in the evening, uh, you know, it sounds like they’re coming through the back yard, but uh …

I: [laughs]

P: Yeah, they’re, they’re pretty close. But it’s, you know, they’re generally interested in the, you know, what’s going on in the area, and uh, um. Things are, people are interested in seeing things that they can’t see in other locations, and uh, so it’s … And they’re visiting in the area, sometimes, they want ideas about what to do, what to see, and uh, they hardly know, generally, where they are. They’re, you know, they just come out of the cities or uh, traveling through or whatever. And uh, you know, they just, are, seem interested, though, in uh, maybe some of the latest things that are going on.

I: Oh, sure.

P: …In the economy of the area.

I: Hm. My next question is: do you talk about agriculture with people who mostly grew
up in rural, urban or suburban areas?

P: All of them, yes.

I: Ok. Um, do you tend to talk about agriculture with one group, rural, urban or suburban, more than another?

P: Oh gosh. Um. Probably might be more suburban areas, or more, suburban guests, that we have then, uh, uh, that are interested in what’s outside of the cities, you know. We have a bike path that goes right in front of the house on the street so we have a lot of, you know, travelers that are biking from Cincinnati to Cleveland …

I: Wow.

P: …Or whatever. There’s, you know, a lot of people in biking that go by on these old railroad beds, old railroad beds that see the cornfields and the soybean fields and just have questions about, ‘where’s all this grain go?’ or ‘What is it?’ Just general questions like that.

I: Mm-hm. Well, that actually kind of goes with my next question, NAME, which is: Do consumers ask you questions about agriculture, and if so, what kinds of questions do they ask?

P: Well, they ask about, you know, the corn and soybeans that they see growing in the summertime, and of course, the empty fields in the winter. And uh, you know, some have even asked about the, the huge grain, grain bins that are just around the corner from us, you know, and uh, uh, where the corn goes, and uh, you know, or, they can see it, trucks, semi trucks of farmers. Trucks coming in and out, and they comment about all the trucks that are coming through town and uh, uh, going in and out, and just uh, it’s a pretty big operation over there. It generates a lot of, a lot of discussion.

I: Mm-hm. Um, actually, and that was next one, which is: can you give me some examples, and you did. Um, my next question is: how do you respond when they ask you questions. Do you enjoy answering their questions, or does it feel more like a chore?

P: Oh, no, I enjoy talking about it so … You know, that’s my background, and uh, you know, it’s an opportunity to kind of keep, uh, people informed of, you know, what’s going on around them that they may not realize, see things that they don’t have an opportunity to see, and kind of explain it to them.

I: Mm-hm.
P: And uh, we always, you know, whenever we travel, we like to see what is going on in other communities and, uh, ask questions about, you know, what’s going on. Agriculture varies so much from community to community sometimes …

I: Mm-hm.

P: …It’s good to see what, uh, see what kinds of things are going on in other regions.

I: Uh, my next question is: do you feel qualified to answer questions about agriculture from the consumers around you?

P: Oh yes, yeah.

I: And then it’s: why or why not?

P: Well, because of my background, I guess, and uh, the teaching, and I try to keep up-to-date on things, you know, uh. Although some of the newer chemicals that are being used now with, uh, in some of the crops, I don’t have as direct contact with it now, but uh, other than that, I feel pretty qualified, for some of the questions I get that are more general in nature, and I can handle them.

I: Mm-hm. Because how long did you work as an ag teacher?

P: Oh, I actually taught for seven years, but was an administrator over agriculture programs at the career center for over, um, an additional 24 years added to that, so 30 years that I was pretty directly involved in agriculture programs at the high school level.

I: And what was the name of that facility again?

P: Uh, NAME County Career Center.

I: Yup. Thank you. Um, my next question is: do you believe it’s important to talk to consumers about agriculture?

P: Oh yes. Very important.

I: Uh …

P: Most people …

I: Uh, why do you think it’s important?
P: Well, as you mentioned earlier, uh, the percentage of people that are involved in agriculture is so small, uh, the general population, uh, just, you know, you ask them where your food comes from, they’d say the grocery, you know? They don’t realize that it’s, uh, you know, grown locally or it’s imported in from other regions, uh, you know, to supply the grocery stores. And uh, so it’s important to keep people informed about where their food comes from [laughs].

I: Oh sure. Um, my next question is: are there any messages or topics that you believe farmers or the agricultural community are not educating consumers about?

P: Well, I’m, I’m not sure who would take the lead on doing that kind of education. For inst--., once in a while, you’ll see a commercial, you know, maybe for the Pork Producers Council or something, you know, purchase, you know, pork chops, or something, before the football games or something like that. And the Beef Council does similar things, but there’s not a real coordinated, seems like, not as coordinated as possible program, it seems, to educate consumers generally about food production. And where, uh, you know, where our food comes from.

I: Mm-hm.

P: I think there’s some room for improvement there.

I: Um, my next few questions after that, well, and, you kind of touched on this, it was: if yes, can you share what messages or topics about which they need to educate or dialogue more with consumers? Um, and then my next one was: in your opinion, what would be a good way for farmers to interact with or talk with consumers about agriculture?

P: What was the first part of that again, Stephanie?

I: Um, yeah. Um, in your opinion, what would be a good way for farmers to interact with or talk with consumers about agriculture?

P: Oh, a, a good place, um …

I: Or, a good way.

P: A good way.

I: Mm-hm.

P: Um … Probably with the day and age that we live in with, uh, you know, computers and technology and Facebook, and uh, you know, all the things with the handheld devices
at this time [laughs]. It seems like there, maybe should be some way to, uh, um, advertise there or explain things about, you know, where our food comes from and what it costs uh, you know, for farmers to raise corn that ends up in Corn Flakes and, uh, you know, flour from wheat, and uh, our, you know, hamburger that, you know, comes from the cattle that are grown, and uh, you know, those kind of things. Um, some way to inform consumers about, you know, where our food supply comes from and maybe something about the whole food supply chain, of, you know, production to processing to the grocery stores, uh, would be a good place to start.

I: Mm-hm. Ok. NAME, I really appreciate you doing this, you’ve been giving me a lot of good information. Um, and the next one, and I apologize, I may have … I was writing down, it was: do you have any recommendations on how people could reach out … or how farmers could reach out to people who are not directly connected to agriculture?

P: Um, well, you know, marketing’s expensive, but it’s the best way, and the only way, really, to reach, um, the masses, so to speak, um, through, uh, you know, television advertising, or um, um … You know, some way to reach people through the printed page, through the newspapers and things, are, pretty limited I think now. There’s still some people reading the paper, our age group, but uh, younger people, uh, you know, don’t do that too much, unless they read the paper on their [laughs], on their phone.

I: Mm-hm.

P: But, um, that’s, that’s another way to, to reach people, but uh, um, radio and TV advertising, is probably the, to reach the masses, that’s, that’s the, the best option.

I: Mm-hm. And, NAME, didn’t you say, you, you taught like marketing classes at NAME State?

P: Well, I was, they were, I was, I was a salesperson in marketing the Business and Industry Training Programs for NAME State, I was able to provide training classes for industry in Lean Manufacturing, math, etc."

I: Mm-hm.

P: … But I was basically marketing the college’s programs to businesses in the area.

I: Oh. Very cool. Um, NAME, my next question: um, what do you believe is the greatest obstacle for farmers interacting with consumers who are no longer directly connected to agriculture?

P: Well, the, the biggest stumbling block is that, I don’t think … Farmers, sometimes, and
agriculture people, don’t feel that the general public respects them much, or isn’t even interested in what they’re doing. I think there’s a little bit of a hesitation …

I: Mm-hm.

P: … Sometimes, farmers feel like they’re, not so much anymore, I don’t guess, but when I was growing up, there was a, kind of an inferiority complex, that uh, ‘You know, well, I couldn’t do anything else so I’ll just farm’ kind of an attitude.

I: Hm.

P: And uh, that’s so much more technical and so much more education required now than there was 30, 40, 50 years ago, uh, to be able to make it …

I: Mm-hm.

P: … As, in the farming areas. Uh, some … More education’s required now, and uh, I think people need to--, farmers in general, need to be more, uh, uh, I guess outgoing and willing to talk to people about what they’re doing, and what they’re accomplishing, what their work schedules are like. Um … You know, uh, it’s not for everybody, but I think they need to be a little more out front, or at least a little more, uh, uh, willing to discuss things, you know, with people that … Cause they, I think, would respect them more if they knew more about what they were actually doing.

I: Mm-hm.

P: You know, people talk about it … I remember, uh, a TV advertisement I think was on during the SuperBowl game, uh, you know, the ‘Forty-hour work week was done by Tuesday night, and you still had to work the rest of the week’ you know, uh [laughs] …

I: Mm-hm.

P: … Uh, on the farm. Um, and uh, you know, people are always tied into ‘Well, I only want to work 40 hours this week,’ and farmers work two to three times that in a week, generally.

I: NAME, is there anything else you wanted to add about that question?

P: Um, well, I, earlier this morning, I was kind of thinking about how this interview questions, what questions you might ask and all that kind of thing. And I never will forget a bumper sticker I saw years ago …

I: Mm-hm.
P: … Um, it was on the back of a truck or something, farm truck. It said, ‘Don’t criticize farmers with your mouth full.’ And [laughs], it always has rung a bell with me. Um, you know, sometimes, people criticize farmers, especially in the spring and the fall when they’re moving their equipment up and down the road …

I: Mm-hm.

P: … You know, the soccer mom gets hung up behind the tractor, she’s late to the ball game or wherever. They get upset because traffic’s slow and all that kind of thing, and they’re, they criticize the farmers, ‘well, you know, you shouldn’t be on the road,’ and all that kind of thing, and yet they’re doing it when they expect to go the grocery and uh, buy their groceries, uh, for a very small percentage of their income …

I: Mm-hm.

P: And um, uh, so I always remember that bumper sticker, you know: ‘Don’t criticize farmers with your mouth full’ [laughs].

I: Mm-hm.

P: It always seemed a good line to remember.

I: Yeah, I’ve never heard of that before. That’s pretty applicable [laughs].

P: Yeah, that is. It seems to tell a story.

I: Um, NAME, and my last question is: is there anything else I didn’t ask about that you wanted to mention?

P: Um. Well, how many people are you going to try to interview here, in your study?

I: Um, 20 to 30.

P: Twenty to 30, ok.

I: Um.

P: Good. That’s a pretty good number.

I: Yeah.

P: Yeah, ok. Well, let’s see. Um … I’ve been away from the university quite a while, but
I go back for ball games. And I was involved in, uh, AGS fraternity for a couple of years when I was there.

I: Did you say H-E-S?

P: A-G-S.

I: Oh, AGS, ok. Yeah.

P: Yeah. And, uh, I know there’s a lot of changes going on in that time period. When I was there, it was just the College of Agriculture. And now, they’ve of course, included the, started out with Food, and Natural Resources, and all that. It’s a $10 name now …

I: [laughs]

P: … For a similar kind of institution, I guess. But how many kids are involved in the college level now for Ag, Food Science, whatever else they call it?

I: You know, I would need to look that up, but I can definitely email that to you, NAME. I apologize, I should – I think I have that somewhere, but I don’t know quickly I could get to it.

P: Ok, well, that’s alright. I know when I was there, it was, um, about 2,000 most, most, times, kind of stayed around that number. But I just kind of wondered now, you know, what, how many students are involved in that college now. It’s probably, maybe a little bigger than that now, but that’s no, no biggie, but I just kind of wondered if you had an idea.

I: Oh, no, yeah, I will email it to you. I will look it up.

P: Ok.

I: Ok.

P: That’s it, I think. I, I, hopefully I gave you some decent information that would, uh, can, uh, be helpful for whatever you’re studying. I think, generally speaking, uh, the whole agricultural community needs to come up with some kind of a, uh, combined effort of, you know, business people and farmers and any kind of organizations related to it to come up with some kind of a concerted effort to try to educate, our, uh, town cousins, uh, about agriculture and what’s involved with uh, you know, growing crops and, uh, livestock, the food on all of our tables.
I: Mm-hm. Definitely.

P: And the positive, and the positive experiences that kids get, you know, growing up by being involved in even small 4-H and agri--., and, uh, 4-H projects and, uh, agricultural kind of touches on their growing up years is pretty, uh, I don’t know. It just builds a lot of self-confidence and, uh, is a great background, whether you go back to the family farm, or anything. It’s just a, just good background information people need to know about.

I: Mm-hm.

P: That’s it, I think, Stephanie, from my end.

I: Ok. Well, NAME, thank you so much …
Transcript of Interview with Participant 7 on Thursday, February 26, 2015, at 6:08 p.m. I already read him the verbal script. Note: The participant was riding a train during the interview so I had difficulty hearing him at times.

I: Well, NAME, I just started the recorder, and it is 6:08 on Thursday the 26th. So, first of all, I just wanted to ask you some of the demographic questions. Um, so, I guess, first of all, what is your occupation or job title?

P: My occupation, I work for General Electric, um, in finance and [mumble].

I: Oh, in finance and what?

P: NAME.

I: Oh, NAME. Oh, very good. So, where do you live?


I: Ok, and describe where you live now. Do you live in a house, an apartment, a condo?

P: Um, a house.

I: Very good. So are you in one of the suburbs of Chicago, then?

P: Yeah, West Chicago.

I: Very good. Um, well, NAME, what was your major and minor in during college at Ohio State?

FA: The major was, uh, was the, um, gosh, it’s been a while …

I: [laughs]

P: Uh, I had a minor in human nutrition, and the major was in [mumble, mumble, mumble].

I: Oh, wow. Ok, I had a little trouble hearing you. I apologize. Can you say that one more time?

P: Yeah, it was, um, business. I think, um, the actual degree is, um, agribusiness and applied economics …
I: Oh, very good.

P: … and the minor was human nutrition.

I: Oh great. Actually, I can hear you a lot better now. Ok. Um, what year did you graduate from Ohio State?

P: Um, 2000.

I: Ok. Um, did you return to Ohio State for graduate work?

P: Uh, no. I, I went elsewhere.

I: Ok. Well, those are all the demographic questions I have, NAME, so I …

P: Ok.

I: … Will start with the questions. And we have about 22, and if they don’t apply to you, we can just skip ‘em, and um …

P: Ok.

I: That, yeah, that’s not a big deal. So, first of all, to begin, where did you grow up?

P: I grew up in Columbus, Ohio.

I: Very good. What part of Columbus?

P: Uh, so, was actually Reynoldsburg.

I: Oh, very cool, yeah. Um, did you have any connection to agriculture growing up?

P: Uh, I think the only connection was our, our neighborhood, where we grew in Columbus, was farmland. Out in Reynoldsburg, before they developed it, there were a lot of cornfields. That was pretty much the, the farmer connection.

I: Ok, very good. Um, my next question is, if you grew up on a farm, after graduating from Ohio State, did you end up returning to the community where you grew up, or did you move somewhere else? And since you didn’t grow up on a farm, we’ll skip that one. Um, and my next question: what were the occupations of your parents?

P: Um, my dad worked for the EPA … And my mother was an accountant.
I: Very good. Did, so, this is kind of an aside, but when he worked for EPA, did he work downtown?

P: Uh, yes, actually, they had one of the field offices, but he had, uh, there was an office downtown, but he was at one of the field offices.

I: Oh very good.

P: … On the outskirts of Columbus.

I: And NAME, I apologize, I’m going to need to go back, I did ask your age in the demographic questions.

P: Ok, no problem.

I: Yeah, so how old are you?

P: 37.

I: Ok, very good. Thank you. I apologize, I just didn’t want to forget that one. Ok. So another question I had was: if you grew up in a rural community, did you live on a grain farm or a farm where livestock was raised, so that doesn’t apply, so we will go down to the next one, which is No. 7: Um, what do you think is the main reason students do not move back to a rural community after graduating from a college like Ohio State?

P: Um, I guess it really depends on what their group of study was. I think what you study, that is going to dictate what type of um, environment they end up moving to so I think a lot of the students, at least that I was with, in the food and agriculture program, seemed to be from the farming background … and apply that to the farm back home. I think it really depends what your major is. If you’re studying law, or if you’re studying um, economics or finance, you’re most going to move to, uh, the areas in the country or to the places where the jobs are at, probably not return to the farm, unless you’re specifically planning to apply that to the family business.

I: Mm-hm. No, that’s actually very good. And then, um, NAME, while you were a student at Ohio State, did your classes teach you about how to talk to consumers about agriculture?

P: Well, I don’t recall having any classes that really broached that subject.

I: Ok.
P: I think really the goal of the agribusiness program was to be a business-centric program, kind of over toward .... the agricultural industry. So we didn’t spend a lot of, a lot of the marketing classes, stuff like that, were at the Fisher College of Business, so it was more broad-based in their application.

I: What made you decide to be an agribusiness major?

P: Uh, … Truth be told was uh, I was told that at the time when I was inclined to go into the uh, the business school, my GPA wasn’t high enough to get into Fisher so the alternative was to go to the um, Agriculture College of Business and then transfer back over to Fisher.

I: Oh.

P: So I started off at the Agriculture, um, School of Business, and I was, at the time, working in pharmaceuticals at the laboratories in, uh, Columbus, so I thought, if anything, hey, outdoor business and food science and stuff, you know, kind of could potentially be related in pharmaceutical business, so, it may have some benefit for me if I stay in pharmaceutical sales, and then, uh, after. So I ended up staying there the last few years.

I: Oh, very good. Um, since the classes didn’t talk a lot about how to talk to consumers about agriculture, I mean, looking back now, do you wish they had taught you something about that, or have you not really needed that?

P: Um, you know, we had so many electives, but for me, I didn’t know that I really needed a lot of context about how to talk to consumers about agriculture, at least internships that I was involved in, I was at the laboratory at that time, we were more so dealing with, you know, nutrition, and uh, some of maybe ingredients that go into the pharmaceutical product, but I didn’t really need a lot about the agriculture aspects. It was more so kind of the, the benefit to the consumer, more so that we focused on. I didn’t feel any loss, just based on a lot of work I was in, and I was … For me, it didn’t really matter, either way.

I: Mm-hm. Um, NAME, my next question: is your current job in the agriculture field?

P: Um, no.

I: So, can you tell me about your job?

P: Yeah, so currently, so I work for GE [General Electric] in the transportation arm where we build locomotives, um, body equipment, and um, stationary, um, generation sets. Um,
so, most of our work, while we do sell to a lot of the rail lines that do end up pulling grain and stuff like that and … a lot of commodities so it’s a more of a heavy industrial type business (sport) … So my team is responsible for the international piece of that where we sell locomotives and locomotive parts, um, locally to the consumer, producing … rail operators, [mumble] around the world. We work on the cast side and on the export/import function.

I: Wow. That’s pretty exciting. So how long have you been with GE?

P: So, this is my fourth year.

I: Ok, very good. So where did you work after you graduated from Ohio State?

P: So, um, after I graduated from Ohio State, I finished my two-year internship at NAME Laboratories. Um, it didn’t quite work out, the job opportunity, I said I didn’t want to do pharmaceutical sales so I went into banking and worked for JP Morgan Chase for about a year, and then went to P&G.

I: Ok, so when did you leave Columbus, then?

P: So I left Columbus right when I started at P&G, so that would have been 2001.

I: Ok. So, Proctor & Gamble, that’s what you said?

P: Yup, yes.

I: Very good, ok. It’s so neat hearing other people’s stories, that’s really cool. Um, ok, my next question that I have here is: if you grew up with any experiences in agriculture, would you describe them as positive or negative, and why would you describe them that way?

P: Um, let me think. So about three years in adolescence … My folks are from Nigeria, from West Africa, so I did live in Nigeria in West Africa for about three years, um, growing up. So I would say I did get some exposure to agriculture there, agriculture products and um, food is obviously a big challenge in developing countries.

I: Mm-hm.

P: So we did have some exposure to some of the farming stuff because we did live out in some of the rural areas of Nigeria. Um, it was a relatively positive experience, kind of watching them, the, uh, locals, try to work through you know, … crop yields and the challenges they had, when you’d have significant rainfall and flooding and such. So that
was pretty much the more wholesome kind of exposure to agriculture, it was kind of observing that, given that the areas where we lived out were kind of more closer to the areas where you did have farmers and kind of watched them deal with those challenges. But as far as my time in the U.S., we were pretty much in developed neighborhoods and uh, communities, other than the farm fields that were being, you know, gentrified and turned into, you know, housing developments, that was only my exposure.

I: Sure. My next question is: do you talk about agriculture with the people and consumers you interact with on a regular basis at work or with people you see during the week?

P: Uh, not necessarily, no. Uh, I mean, I think, honestly, the only discussions on agriculture now is because we’re in the rail industry, we are interested in crop yields, and when we have a very big crop yield year, that’s going to mean rail traffic is going to be up, and so that’s some of the metrics we look at, as well as the commodity prices and stuff, but really, agriculture from more of a commodity standpoint, with the grain crop yield and such, corn, that determines kind of what rail buying’s going to be, what our sales, as far as metrics that helps to project sales for our industry, for us.

I: Because when they have more commodities that’s more money for … I mean, doesn’t that end up being more profit for GE?

P: Because we’re selling more locomotives, or more parts, doing more servicing, that type of thing. So, bigger crop yield, more traffic on the rail. So they’ll be bringing from the elevators and such to the market to the processors and such.

I: Sure, um, NAME, my next question is: if you talk about agriculture with consumers, what types of subjects related to agriculture typically come up in conversation? And this could be, I mean, this could be anything.

P: Type of subjects you’re saying?

I: Yep.

P: Uh, so I would say the most relevant subject right now for us is the community where we live right now is one of the developing areas of Chicago, west Chicago, and there happens to be a lot of open farmland. So for us, uh, one of the big topics of discussion within the neighborhood, within the homeowner’s association, is about the neighboring corn fields and whether or not the farmers are planting corn or if that’s going to be a bare lot and, and quite frankly, how fast the farmers are going to sell that land to developers to develop more housing. And that’s a big topic of discussion because obviously if they plant more corn and as they, they um, till up the land, you get obviously the byproducts of like field mice, stuff like that. And uh, they do the fall harvests, allergies do act up
because of the byproduct in the air, that type of stuff. So it’s really more just kind of how it affects the neighborhood, how it affects the home sales around us. So a lot of open farm fields does kind of keep the prices stagnated, but once it’s been converted into kind of neighborhoods and housing, uh, better chance that home prices are going to go up because now you have communities are being built up around there as opposed to just open bare land.

I: Ok. So how close are fields to you?

P: Sorry?

I: Like how close are you to like farm fields?

P: Gosh, so, um, our home, our neighborhood is right up against a farm field, so I probably live maybe, I would say maybe a tenth of a mile from open farm land.

I: Wow, ok. Interesting. And my next question was: if you talk with consumers about agriculture, do you usually initiate these conversations?

P: It really all depends on the subject, right, so, um, for me, I think, some of the things that interest us in the industry, so if we have a conversation with friends or family about crop yields, things of that nature. I think one of the things that are of interest to us in our industry is that it be modified, um, food products, and, and, its use in the developing markets because we’re an international business. We do a lot of business overseas in developing countries so I do have some friends that are involved in kind of agribusiness overseas. One of the big points of discussion that we may have, maybe over you know, a dinner party or so forth, the benefits and how those products are being perceived in these countries. And obviously, for the rail industry, we’re seeing a lot of uptick in the developing countries as these guys are modernizing their rail systems and some of that is to, to pull commodities and things of that nature to port for those countries to export in sub Saharan Africa. So that becomes kind of a general discussion point. I don’t typically initiate those, it typically just, discussion just kind of happens as we talk about global geo-politics and this in developing countries.

I: Sure. I appreciate you doing this because I think you’re giving me a really new perspective, and I like that. The next one is: do you talk about agriculture with people who grew up in mostly rural, urban or suburban areas?

P: Uh. As far as the demographics of the individuals, I would say folks who maybe grew up in certain rural areas maybe understand a little more of the context of agriculture. Um, in the more urban areas, uh, probably not. Because they didn’t maybe grow up like me next to farm fields, you know, open land, because of the neighborhoods we live in are,
currently. So there are typically people in the rural areas and stuff, maybe people around our neighborhood where we currently live at right now, could be talking, having those discussions.

I: Sure.

P: And any friends and so forth that may be having those discussions about, you know, crop yields in developing countries and stuff, I would say they probably come from maybe more of a city background and stuff, so it’s a mixture.

I: Ok, sure. If that stuff comes up at dinner, like are people usually pretty receptive to talking about agriculture or about commodity yields?

P: Um, it’s usually not the main topic of discussion, right. … But it, it does make for some interesting discussions when you talk about the perception of like, uh, genetically, modified, um, uh, agriculture, and blue products and stuff. And so it comes, country … Perception of stuff. Especially when you talk about countries like Nigeria where I know they use fertilizers and I’m thinking of the different types of seeds that um, better withstand the arid, dryer climates.

I: Mm-hm.

P: So you know, it depends. That subject comes up, has come up, because a good family friend actually works in that industry over there. Um, but typically, it’s few and far between. It’s not, it doesn’t dominate the conversation.

I: Oh sure. Uh, my next one is: do consumers ask you questions about agriculture?

P: Uh, typically not. Um, I would say [laughs]. The only time that I would really get questions about agriculture is because people are interested in the degree, the agriculture degree that I have because it says on the diploma, you know, a B.S. in agriculture. So they wonder, hey, what did you study?

I: Ok, sure. My next question: do you feel qualified to answer questions about agriculture from the consumers around you?

P: Probably not. I don’t have a lot of context to provide, other than what I read or learned from other, uh, people in the industry. So not very heavily qualified.

I: Ok. Uh, my next …

P: And, let me ask you a question.
I: Yeah.

P: When you talk about agriculture, are you talking about it in the broad sense of like food, science as well, or are you talking specifically about agriculture as we know it, farming and that type of stuff?

I: Um, I think it’s pretty broad. So, I mean, that can be agriculture like farmers with combines, that could be commodity stuff, that could be local foods, I mean, pretty much anything dealing with food.

P: So, more on those lines, I think one discussion that I know my wife and I have all the time is the higher cost of food. Fresh fruits and vegetables and stuff.

I: Mm-hm.

P: That seems to be um, on the rise here lately. So, um, I would say, we’ve had some more interesting conversations, having lived in downtown Chicago, for uh, maybe about half a year, about there being food deserts. You can’t always find a lot of fresh produce at some of these local grocery stores. Typically, local grocery stores are going to be convenience stores, that’s where we get most of their food, or, quick easy food. So it would be called food deserts, and the inner city community, I know it’s always a topic for discussion. My wife’s a sociologist and so that’s one of the things she’s passionate about, and having lived in the city, she’d talk about the challenge of having to drive all over the distance to find grocery stores where you can get fresh produce and the high cost of fresh produce. Especially at places like a Whole Foods and things of that nature, where it’s a little more expensive to eat healthier.

I: Mm-hm.

P: So those discussions do come up from time to time.

I: Oh sure. My next question: um, do you believe it’s important to talk to consumers and that, I mean, the people around you, because when you think about it, everyone is a consumer, um, about agriculture?

P: Uh, I think it’s an important discussion, I mean, now that you gave a little more context that it’s on the broader subject …

I: Yeah, I apologize, I should’ve done that at the beginning.

P: Oh, no, not a problem. The whole concept of food deserts I think is a real issue, especially in inner city communities. So I think it’s an important topic and discussion and
oftentimes it’s overlooked, but having spent time in inner city, I have family that’s there and such, uh, you … the convenience stores are predominantly where people get a lot of their quick easy food, the bread, cereals, things of that nature. Fresh fruits are just typically not on the shelves. So I think there’s a big gap there. So I think it’s an important discussion, healthy eating and all of that stuff.

I: Mm-hm. Um, ok. Now my next one is: are there any questions or topics that you believe that farmers or the agricultural community as a whole, that they’re not educating consumers about?

P: Uh. I would say there’s an opportunity to talk a little more about the genetically modified foods and crops. I think there’s a general perception amongst the general populous that there’s something wrong there because you’re genetically modified and the whole term genetically modified tends to scare people, because they don’t understand the context or the science behind it. So I think it’s an opportunity to talk a little more about that and why it’s a big deal, why it’s important, and kind of the pros and cons of that to better educate consumers about that. The same thing though, education around uh, the big push around gluten free. I think to the extent that, you know, farmers and agriculture can educate consumers about that stuff, people can be a little wiser about what they’re purchasing, as to whether or not they need gluten free food or it’s just a fad.

I: Oh, sure. My next one was kind of a sub-question with that, was: if yes, can you share what messages or topics about which they need to educate or dialogue better with consumers? Uh, I feel like you kind of mentioned that, but if you want to add anything else, let me know.

P: Yeah. I think it’s simply that. I think the availability of fresh produce, especially in some of these, uh, urban neighborhoods, the cost because it’s a high cost. I think there are ways to actually drive some of these costs down so fresh fruits and vegetables are readily available throughout these communities. Talking about genetically modified, you know, talking about the importance of that, making people understand the pros and cons behind that. I think those are some of the highlights.

I: Sure. Uh, the next question: in your opinion, what would be a good way for farmers to interact with or talk with consumers about agriculture?

P: Wow, um. I think you have to have a medium by which they can reach the masses, and by which people will actually lean in and actually you know, absorb some of what they’re talking about. So I think it’s probably going to be uh, more so, venues like the evening news. Maybe some TED talks. I know, at least amongst our generation, you know TED talks are very big amongst the educated population, in kind of your 20s, 30s. I think using that forum would be something that would be openly accepted because TED talks are
kind of seen as a general kind of place where one really is able to get good …
information from the experts inside any specific field. So I think TED talks and probably
maybe some news cycles, or sorry, segments on news cycles, you know, like maybe a
CNN or MSNBC, where you can actually talk to somebody about that stuff, would
actually be a company that would actually benefit. I don’t think social media and type of
stuff is really going to uh, is really going to push it out because that stuff, you kind of
have to pull it out on your own social media. So I think using those forms, a TED talk,
maybe a broadcast, could be a means by which they could connect to the masses.

I: Mm-hm. My next one: do you have any recommendations on how people could reach
out—oh, I’m sorry—how farmers could reach out to people who are not directly
connected to agriculture?

P: Uh. I would say you know, kind of as an add-on to your last question, probably also
using the form of their local maybe grocery stores. Kind of partnering up the Whole
Foods with the, in Chicago, it’s called Mariano’s, or the Kroger’s and using that maybe
as a way by which to communicate because you’re kind of reaching consumers at the
point of sale. Everyone’s going to their grocery store to get, you know, their produce and
their boxed food commodities and stuff. So I don’t know, I mean, some have those
tasting sessions at these different um grocers. Maybe having that as a venue
where farmers can actually talk a little more about their product. You know, maybe
certain farmers who are maybe, I don’t know, vegetable farmers and stuff, maybe they’re
there and they can talk to consumers as they’re buying products, to use as a method to
you know, the whole aspect of the science behind the farming, pesticides, you know,
what they use, how they provide the types of products that consumers are purchasing. It’s
an idea.

I: Sure. My next question, and we’re getting--we’re about finished. What do you believe
is the greatest obstacle for farmers interacting with consumers who are no longer directly
connected to agriculture?

P: Uh, some perception, I think. The perception that, you know, farmers are out there
kind of in rural communities, wearing cowboy boots and hats, and uh, that are different
from kind of the urban centers, population centers. So I would say that perception is um,
probably a little more challenging. City folks here in Chicago, uh, it’s very different from
the rural suburbs where you have farming communities and stuff, a quainter way of life.
So I think that perception of farmers kind of being rural, outside the Beltway type of guy,
I think is probably one of the challenge.

I: Uh, so like rural, behind the times, is that what you mean, or?

P: Uh, behind the times slash to the maybe kind of out of touch. Because they’re not kind
of in a developed way kind of connected to, the perception connected to what’s going on in kind of major metropolises. But in reality, that’s a farce. Farmers are very connected to technology, they use technology in order to help them you know improve crop yields, obviously, very technologically advanced combines, things of that nature. So I think that perception that those guys are out in the rural farmlands of the country so those guys don’t really understand what’s going on in the cities and such.

I: Oh, sure, yeah. Is there anything I didn’t ask about that you wanted to mention?

P: Uh, no, I think you covered everything.

I: Ok, and did at the beginning, did you say you had a family member who does GMOs in Nigeria? Is that what you said?

P: So, a, a family friend …

I: Oh, ok.

P: … Who is actually connected to a company called the NAME Group, and uh the NAME Group does pharmaceuticals, I’m sorry, not pharmaceuticals, does pesticides and some other, um, sorry, one moment. The train, they’re talking over the intercom.

I: No, you’re fine.

P: One moment. So the family friend, he works for the NAME Group, and those guys are heavily involved in like, in pesticides and improving crop yields out in sub Saharan Africa.

I: Wow.

P: That’s something he’s real passionate about, about improving crop yields and stuff because obviously, fresh fruits and vegetables and crops is a big deal in a lot of the emerging markets to feed the population there.

I: Mm-hm, for sure. So when did you move from Nigeria to the U.S.?

P: Uh, so that was what, 1986? We lived there about 82, 83 to about 86, as a kid.

I: Wow, do you ever go back?

P: I have not been back since so that’s, uh, shame on me, but my folks do go back and forth, once or twice a year so this year will be probably my first time going back.
I: Oh, so you’re going to go?

FA: Yes. Going this fall.

I: That would be great. I’ve never been to Nigeria, so …

P: Have you been to Sub-Saharan Africa?

I: I have not. I’ve only been to the Dominican, for a missions trip so I’m itching to travel [laughs].

p: Yeah, you should definitely put it on your to-do list. I mean, you’ll find the atmosphere and the general demographics very interesting, but if you’re heavily involved into the agriculture kind of space, you’ll find it very interesting, the things they’re doing today to kind of improve crop yields and stuff. A huge variety of different types of climates, from the very arid rainforest, just very dry, kind of desolate, um, plain and such. You get an appreciation for the challenges of the different types of soil, different just overall environmental challenges and getting crops sustained in environments like that, with the technology and things that we employ here in the U.S. to help us.

I: Oh sure. Oh, wow, that is so neat, like, I mean, that’s a very neat life story, it’s just very cool.

p: Yes, I’ve been very fortunate.

I: But yes, I would love to get over there. And NAME, I think my phone was a little muffled when you first started. What was your occupation or your job title?

P: Oh, the job title is: NAME leader.

I: NAME leader, ok, at GE, right?

P: Yes, GE Transportation.

I: And what depart—so the department would be GE Transportation?

P: Yeah so it’s the GE Transportation division of the company.

I: Very good. Well, was there anything else you wanted to add?

FA: No, that was it.
Transcript of Interview with Participant 8 on Friday, February 27, 2015, at 6:05 p.m. I already read her the verbal script.

I: Ok, NAME, it is 6:05 on Friday, the 27th, um so first, I just wanted to get started by asking you some of those demographic questions. Um, and the first one is: what is your occupation or job title?

P: Senior assistant superintendent at a golf course out in Colorado.

I: Oh wow. Did you say senior assistant?

P: Yes.

I: Ok. How long have you been there?

P: I’ve been here for just over four years.

I: Oh, good for you. And that was the next question: where do you live? So where do you live specifically in Colorado?

P: NAME, Colorado.

I: NAME, ok, and then the next one is: describe where you live now. Do you live in a house, an apartment, a condo?

P: I live in a … townhouse.

I: The next question is: how old are you?

P: I am 27.

I: Ok. And then what was your major and minor in during college at Ohio State?

P: My major was turf grass management and my minor was animal sciences.

I: And what year did you graduate?


I: Ok. And then the last demographic question is: did you return to Ohio State for graduate work?
P: No, I did not. My graduate was at Penn State.

I: Oh, what did you get at Penn State?

P: A master’s in professional science in turf grass management.

I: Wow. What year did you graduate from there, then?

P: 2013.

I: Oh, good for you. Um, ok, well, NAME, thank you, those were my demographic questions so now I’ll go into my other questions. There are about 22, but some of them are more yes and no, so I will go ahead and get started. So, to begin: where did you grow up?

P: I grew up in a small town just outside of Bowling Green, Ohio.

I: Ok. Can I get the name of it?

P: NAME, Ohio.

I: NAME? Is that what you said?

P: Yes.

I: Ok, very good. Um, did you have any connections to agriculture growing up?

P: I grew up raising um, mainly sheep, one year I raised a llama, and I was continuously around grain farming with my uncle.

I: Great. The third question is: if you grew up in a rural community, did you live on a grain farm or a farm where livestock was raised?

P: I did livestock.

I: Ok. And you weren’t on a farm, specifically, if that right, or you were?

P: I was on a farm.

I: You were? Ok. Um, and then my next kind of sub-question with that is: can you share any details about your upbringing, such as how many acres your family’s farm consisted of, or what they raised specifically?
P: Uh, we raised sheep mainly, um, very small sheep farm.

I: Mm-hm, sure.

P: … About 15 head I think, max.

I: Mm-hm. My next question is: what were the occupations of your parents?

P: Uh, my mom was the deputy clerk of courts growing up, but she’s now the clerk of courts in Wood County, and my dad is self-employed.

I: Ok, alright. My fifth question: if you grew up on a farm, after graduating from Ohio State, did you end up returning to the rural community where you grew up, or did you move somewhere else?

P: I moved somewhere else, after I graduated high school …

I: That’s the next question: if you didn’t return to that same community, where did you move?

P: Um, Doylestown, Pennsylvania.

I: Oh, ok. Um, my sixth question: if you grew up on a farm, did you ever think of returning to the farm you grew up on, or by starting your own farm?

P: Um, no, I did not.

I: Ok. The sub-question with that: if you did move away after graduating, what kept you from returning to that, basically, where you grew up?

P: Occupation, career.

I: Um, my seventh question: what do you think is the main reason students do not move back to a rural community after graduating from a college like Ohio State?

P: I think it’s just the market for the jobs right now, it’s not there like it used to be. And they’re not involved as much in the family farm or they don’t enjoy it as much as their parents did.

I: Mm-hm.

P: Or they got farther in their degree and education than their parents did, kind of a way
to move away, too.

I: My next question: while you were a student at Ohio State, did your classes teach you about how to talk to consumers about agriculture?

P: Uh, no, they did not, that I can remember.

I: Ok. If no, did you wish they had taught you anything in particular about talking to consumers about agriculture, or not?

P: Yes, a little bit, which is, more elaborated, especially I guess, organic stuff was starting to get big when I was still in school, and I wish they would’ve informed us a little bit more on that. I mean, I wasn’t completely informed on it, research on my own, and going from that way, to still today I’m trying to push people away from organic, but they just don’t listen.

I: Is your current job in the agricultural field?

P: Um, it is in the landscaping field more, not like food farming, that kind of agriculture, but it’s still in agriculture.

I: Mm-hm. Um, the next one was: can you explain what the connection to agriculture is in your job. Um, or what does a typical day look like for you?

P: Uh, it can range from anything. Um, connections is still researching, you know everyone does research, and it’s more of, still dealing with chemicals a lot, but my normal day is: in the summer, get up, go to work, out at 4 a.m. Get equipment ready for the crew and then go out and do course setup, get the bush ready and then going into the afternoon, getting crews set up with their jobs, mowing, and I’m normally checking irrigation and just checking the course out.

I: How big is the golf course?

P: That ends about 3:30, 4 o’clock in the afternoon.

I: Wow, that’s a long day.

P: It can get longer.

I: Oh my gosh [laughs]. So how big is the golf course?

P: We’re an 18-hole private course.
I: Ok. That sounds like a lot of responsibility [laughs].

P: It is.

I: Yeah, wow. My next question: if you grew up with some experiences in agriculture, would you describe them as positive or negative, and why would you describe them that way?

P: I would describe them as positive, um, it gave me a lot of my work ethic, which has actually helped me succeed farther in the career. I think having that agriculture background has helped me get farther in my career than someone that may not have agriculture, they don’t, may not know the work ethic, that I got growing up since mine was a 24/7 job on a farm. And some of the kids that come out of college are still not even that, even if they have lived on the farm. I tease them, that some them are faking it … Some are lazier, and exceptionally lazy, just not all around work ethic-wise is great anymore.

I: Hm. Um, my next question: do you talk about agriculture with the people and consumers you interact with on a regular basis at work or with people you see during the week?

P: Not a whole lot. I guess the only people I really talk about agriculture with is my brother when we start arguing over chemicals applied to golf courses versus fields.

I: That sounds interesting. What do you guys argue about with that?

P: Um, basically, what they are and what they go with. He’s actually back in grad school at Ohio State, so …

I: Oh.

P: He’s always asking me about schooling stuff and with the bachelor’s, I kind of did it when I was in school so we feed off of each other. I still constantly read about agriculture, just staying involved in the industry that I grew up in.

I: Great. Um, my next question: if you talk about agriculture with consumers, what types of subjects related to agriculture typically come up in conversation?

P: Um, I think most are my upbringing and what I did growing up. Not a lot of it deals with like what’s current, I feel like a lot of it’s just kind of the upbringing I came up with and how I came into the golf industry from farming and being in that area.
I: Hm. What got you interested in turf management?

P: My first tax, tax job, I guess. Um, I just did it as a summer job, and actually, with my American degree, to get my American degree, and just kind of went from there, enjoyed it, enjoyed the challenges, and went from there.

I: Ok. My next question: if you talk with consumers about agriculture, and this can be like upbringing, food, I mean, commodities, this can be anything, if you talk with them about agriculture, do you usually initiate these conversations?

P: Uh, no, I normally don’t. We just kind of get, it’s through talking about employment, I guess, and it kind of leads to going about your work ethic and all that.

I: Sure. Um, the sub-question with that is: if you do not initiate these conversations, is there a reason why you don’t? Or is it, if you do initiate these conversations, are people pretty receptive?

P: Um, I just, I guess I’ve never been someone to gloat about myself and talk about myself, when I’ve not needed to, so I don’t initiate the fact that I grew up with agriculture, even though some people know it by the way they see me and how I present myself.

I: Mm-hm. We’re on question 14 already. Um, do you talk about agriculture with people who mostly grew up in rural, urban, or suburban areas?

P: I would probably say urban to suburban areas, not too many out of the rural areas.

I: Ok. Um, so probably more urban or suburban. And then, do you talk agriculture—or, if you do talk about agriculture, how receptive is each group—the urban, rural, suburban—about talking about agriculture?

P: Um, the urban ones are a little less receptive. They don’t really like to hear what we do out on the farm, and I know things have changed, obviously, since I’ve been on the farm, but there are still some things that haven’t. I think people in the rural just kind of, like, oh yeah, you know, probably biased, but they’re kind of used to some of this stuff. It kind of goes from like receptive to like understanding it to not understanding it at all, I would say. More of the urban people who are not understanding it, but when you get to like the rural areas, they’re kind of more understanding of practices and procedures that are taken out on the farm.

I: My next question: if consumers, oh, sorry—do consumers ask you questions about agriculture, if yes, what kind of questions do they ask?
P: Not really, actually. I don’t really get approached about things agriculture, especially with foods and farming. Um, maybe practices on the golf course we do, and why we do certain things the way we do it, and the upside of the issue, I guess, is agriculture practices we do on the golf course.

I: Oh, ok, sure. Um, kind of the sub-question with that one, and you don’t have to answer it, um, it’s like: if they do ask you questions, how do you respond? Do you enjoy answering their questions, or does it feel more like a chore?

P: Uh, I enjoy answering them because the more people you can explain things to, the more you get on your side and they’re more willing to understand and accept what you’re doing, especially out on a golf course. It helps you out more, in a way, unless you answer it, then if you don’t answer it, then it kind of hurts your ability to do, some of like, your agricultural practices that need to be done.

I: Can you give me an example?

P: I guess one of them is why we aerify our tees and greens and stuff, and why can’t we aerify later, keep the golf course open later, and mainly, the reason you have to aerify to get air down to your soil and your roots. And we’re in a mountain community so we’re always under snow in the winter, and so we’re dealing with diseases so we’re like we have to have it done, and have it top-dressed so that we can get our … application down before we get to too late in the year, and that’s why we close at a certain time.

I: Hm. Thank you, that’s actually helpful. That gives me kind of a better picture. Question 16: do you feel qualified to answer questions about agriculture from the consumers around you? Um, why or why not?

P: I do, um, mainly because my boss has kind of enforced knowing what I’m doing on the course, and if I do have a question of why we do certain things the way we do, I ask him, and it gives me better clarification. Then I can, you know, if they ask me something I don’t know, I would say, ‘Well, I need to do more research,’ or ‘I don’t have the exact answer,’ it doesn’t make you sound as professional as you probably should.

I: Hm. Do a lot of people ask you questions about why you do stuff on the golf course? Like people who, I mean, use it?

P: They do. They’ll ask me certain things, you know, why are we doing this and this, when? I can’t just say, ‘Because my boss said so,’ but you know, I have to kind of explain it the best I can. And if I have problems, then I’m like, ‘Well, let me get back to you, you know, let me get some more information for you.’ So it’s trying to sound professional but not completely blowing them off and, kind of a difficult thing,
sometimes.

I: Right. Uh, my next question: do you believe it is important to talk to consumers about agriculture?

P: Yes.

I: Um, the sub-question is: if so, why do you think it’s important?

P: Um, a lot of it’s important because that’s, one, the way they get fed, but also it’s more of, people are … We’re doing, feeding, more people now on less land than we had, did, 100 years ago. And that’s one thing that they need to understand and it’s just not going to come up in the middle of a tree, off of a tree in the city, like they think it could. Or, and it’s kind of funny when people are like, ‘Where does food come from? A store?’ I’m like, ‘No, that actually came from a cow,’ or ‘That came from a pig.’

I: Mm-hm. Have you had a lot of conversations like that?

P: I have, in some instances. I have definitely had people ask me, or I’ve seen people ask kids from volunteering, she’s like, ‘Oh, where does your hamburger come from?’ and they say the store. It’s kind of like, if you don’t educate the youth, they’re going to grow up pretty, I guess … Stupid is not the right word, but close enough to that word that I’m looking for.

I: Uneducated, uninformed, something like that.

P: Yeah, something like that. They’re not going to be as informed and it’s better to educate them younger, the easier it’s going to be to have the youth educated and maybe move them up farther.

I: Question 18: are there any messages or topics you believe that farmers or the agricultural community are not educating consumers about?

P: I haven’t really been following it lately, but um, I think farmers are well informed on it cause they’re the ones having to deal with the basics of it. I do have a feeling they don’t know how to educate the people around them, but with consumers, they’re definitely uneducated on the fact of GMOs. They’re not, they’re not a bad thing. I mean, you can, they’re actually producing more food for us and stuff. And I think some people view GMOs to be bad, and they view organic to be good, and they’re viewing, you know, corn that has no pesticides on it to be better than corn that is being used with pesticides or something.
I: Mm-hm. Um, the sub-question with that is: if yes, can you share what messages or topics which they need to educate or dialogue with consumers?

P: Um, you know, they just, I think it needs to be written in simple terms for them to understand. We’re used to, as being in the agriculture industry, we’re used to more of the technical terms toward your industry, whether it be farming, landscape, or what I’m doing, we’re used to the technical terms, and it’s one of those things that you just need to dumb it down for the average Joe who knows nothing about the industry, so it’s easier for them to understand.

I: Mm-hm. Question No. 19: in your opinion, what would be a good way for farmers to interact with or talk with consumers about agriculture?

P: Oh, you know, I can’t remember how it, what county has it back in Ohio, but I know there’s some that have farmer talks, or they have, from ground to plate, or from farm to plate kind of series, and it’s a good way. You can interact with like, ‘This came from our farm, this is what we’ve used on our farm, with our pigs, our beef, our chickens or whatever, and this is the product you’re getting out of something that has been from the farm.’ And then a way that you can educate them with a product in front of you, in front of the consumer because consumers are not going to completely understand it in a fact of being, if it’s just shown on pictures or something, they’re not going to understand it as well as if it’s something in front of them that they can taste, or they can see, touch. A lot of people learn by seeing and touching rather than just hearing.

I: Mm-hm. The sub-question with that was: can you share any specific examples? … And if you don’t want to, that’s fine, I feel like you, you already gave me some.

P: Yeah, just go with the first part.

I: Ok, um, No. 20: do you have any recommendations on how farmers could reach out to people who are not directly connected to agriculture?

P: You know, there are some people that just are attacking farmers right there on their own land, and I guess that’s the best way to do it, um, but to prevent that, politicians should have a town hall meeting, I guess, and bring in people that are exactly in with agriculture and inform them that a lot of times it doesn’t get done that way. They get attacked on their own land.

I: Mm-hm. Um, my next question: what do you believe is the greatest obstacle for farmers interacting with consumers who are no longer directly connected to agriculture?

P: How things have changed. I mean, everything’s changed in the past five years, it
seems, and it’s continuingly to be changed.

I: Uh, do you want to elaborate?

P: I guess, you know, technology’s been advanced a lot more, I know everything’s starting to get more GPS-wise, but then it’s actually helping, and you can maybe get more food, crops in the field. But I think it’s just more technology, scientific research has changed, and it’s getting to the better part for us, as far as the farmers who are just like increasing their yield and everything like that.

I: Mm-hm. And then, is there anything I didn’t ask about that you wanted to add to the conversation?

P: No, I think you hit a lot of it.

I: Ok, and then I have one more because I think it’s so cool that you live out in Colorado. Have you noticed like a difference as far as people who talk about agriculture or even food like in Ohio versus Colorado? Or is it pretty much the same?

P: I think the uh … Honestly, back home, like I grew up in a very rural area, you know, I wasn’t. I was still close to BG [Bowling Green] and Toledo, but I would say a lot of it is especially up in a mountain community, it’s everyone is just trying to … Like Colorado is a very healthy state. Everyone, it’s, funny, actually, when you get on an airplane. You leave Colorado and when you have to do connections, people get bigger. When you get back to Colorado, people get skinnier, so it’s kind of funny in that aspect. But I feel like, for a more healthier state than Ohio is, and so, I feel like a lot of people here are eating organic foods, and I’m probably one of the few that don’t rely on organic foods as my main source because it’s not how I grew up. I grew up from the field or from the garden, and I’m totally ok with that, I know how to take care of what I eat. But, I think a lot of it, I’m in the mountain area so they’re even healthier because we’re at 7,500 above sea level, so it’s a different way of eating. And then I know in eastern Colorado, I mean, they have like no rain anyways, so it’s one of those things. It transitions throughout all of Colorado. I guess mountain communities are very organic-y. You get out to the eastern part of Colorado, I think it’s more like Ohio. You know, they grow everything their own, they’ll, especially their own cow and all that. But I think it’s just demographics of where you’re at. I think mountain areas are very different than plain areas, or Ohio, actually.

I: Mm-hm. Interesting. So what county are you in in Colorado?

P: NAME County.

I: NAME County. So that’s not by Rocky Mountain National Park is it?
P: I believe that’s actually down towards the Front Range. I’m actually up by NAME.

I: Oh, ok, very good. Ok, well, let me … Is there anything else you wanted to add?

P: No, I think that’s … It hit a lot of what’s changed, even throughout the last 10 years.
Transcript of Interview with Participant 9 on Tuesday, March 3, 2015, at 2:07 p.m. I already read him the verbal script.

I: Ok, NAME, it is 2:07 on Tuesday, March 3, so I will go ahead and get started. First, I wanted to ask you some demographic questions. So first off, what is your occupation or job title?

P: Uh, I’m a youth services specialist, a contractor for the Army Reserve.

I: Oh. What did you, did you say you’re a contractor with the Army Reserve?

P: Yeah, I actually work for a company called NAME TCI based out of Atlanta, um, but they’re contracted for the Army Reserve so I work for the Army Reserve on a daily basis, but I technically work for a contract company.

I: Oh, ok.

P: So I’m not a government employee, I’m a private employee whose services are contracted by the Army Reserve.

I: Where do you live?

P: I live in NAME, Illinois.

I: NAME, Illinois, ok. Very good. Um, so do you live in a house, an apartment, a condo?

P: A house.

I: My next question: how old are you?

P: 32.

I: Ok. What was your major and minor in during college at Ohio State?

P: Ag ed.

I: And what year did you graduate?


I: Ok. And then did you return to Ohio State for graduate work?
P: No, I did graduate work at the University of Maryland.

I: Oh, what’d you major in?

P: Uh, distance education.

I: Oh. And when you were at Ohio State, did you minor in anything?

P: Production agriculture.

I: Oh, very good. Ok, NAME, those are my kind of background questions, um, so we’ll start with the first real question. To begin, where did you grow up?

P: NAME, Ohio.

I: Sure. What county is that in?

P: Huron County.

I: Great. Did you have any connection to agriculture growing up?

P: Uh, no. My grandparents had a small family farm, but not my parents.

I: Ok. Um, if you grew up in a rural community, did you grow up on a grain farm or a farm where livestock was raised?

P: No.

I: Ok. No. 4, what were the occupations of your parents?

P: Um, my dad’s a diesel mechanic, and my mom worked in IT.

I: Cool. Uh, No. 5, if you grew up on a farm after … I’ll go ahead and read this, even though it doesn’t technically apply, if you grew up on a farm after graduating from Ohio State, did you end up returning to the rural community where you grew up, or did you move somewhere else?

P: I did move somewhere else.

I: Ok. Did you go to your grandparents’ farm very often?

P: Oh, you know, weekends here and there. I’d probably say I was there once a week,
maybe, every other week.

I: Where was their farm?

P: Uh, small beef cows, some crops, soybeans, corn, stuff like that.

I: Sure. What made you want to do ag ed?

P: Uh, 4-H. I wanted to be an extension educator, ag ed’s pretty much the route you take for that.

I: What did you do in 4-H?

P: I was real involved with uh, youth programming, like counselor, camp counselors, and stuff like that. Um, that’s actually how I got um, my first job, through connections through the ag ed program with Dr. Ferrari. Uh, she was doing Operation: Military Kids camp, and I was one of her camp counselors there the first year they did their own kid camp and a couple preceding years. And through a referral from her, I ended up working for 4-H in Maryland, working with their 4-H and military program, and then from there, I accepted a position with the Army Reserve in Illinois.

I: Great.

P: In Illinois.

I: So it sounds like you’ve done quite a few things. So did you, did you show any different sort of projects in 4-H, or what did you grow up doing?

P: Oh, I did the leadership projects. Um, when I was young, 8-years-old, that time frame, I did dogs, obedience and that sort of stuff. And then, as I got older, I did the leadership stuff, and uh, um, still projects, archery, that sort of stuff.

I: Ok. How many years did you have in 4-H?

P: Ten, 11, maybe.

I: Great. Well, thank you, that just kind of gives me some background. My next question ...

P: I also, I did, oh, I’m sorry, I did my first few years at ATI in Wooster, in the agriculture department. I did their programming, I did trips and abroad to Ghana.
I: What did you do in Ghana?

P: Extension programming.

I: Wow. But you’re not doing any of that in your current job, right?

P: No.

I: Do you miss it, or do you like what you’re doing?

P: Uh, I like what I’m doing. Eventually, I would like to find my way back to the Extension community.

I: Ok, sure. Um, my next question, um, and again, this doesn’t really apply, but I’ll go ahead and ask it: if you grew up on a farm, did you ever think of returning to work on the farm you grew up on, or by starting your own farm?

P: No.

I: The next question: what do you think is the main reason students do not move back to rural communities after graduating from a college like Ohio State?

P: Jobs.

I: Do you want to add anything else, or is that …

P: Uh, no, I mean, my personal experience, I mean, obviously, I would’ve preferred to stick close, um, to home, but uh, going out in a field where there isn’t that many jobs, I mean, the options were pretty limited. You had to open up your search to include basically the entire country, um. It’s difficult to find a job in agriculture, or in Extension education, you know. And there’s only four or five positions a county in the entire state so you basically have to be willing to move.

I: No. 8, while you were a student at Ohio State, did your classes teach you about how to talk to consumers about agriculture?

P: Uh, yeah. I mean, my minor was in production ag, so yeah, that was involved.

I: Ok. Um, if yes, have you found that information helpful as an adult?

P: Uh, not in my current line of work, but … And it just so happens that when I got involved with Extension, it was working with military folks and not, you know, the
average 4-H program. Um, if it was in the average 4-H program, it would have been invaluable, and necessary, but it just so happened that the position I took was working with a non-rural demographic.

I: Oh sure. The next question: is your current job in the agriculture field?

P: No.

I: Ok. What does a typical day look like for you?

P: Uh, go to the office. I live about 15 minutes from the office, go to the office, spend eight and a half hours there, then come home.

I: [laughs]

P: Then I do a lot of, I do a lot of traveling for work. We do youth programs called Y-Leads, they’re for four to five days, so those are, you know, travel to whatever city it’s in and go, go, go, um, from 7 o’clock to 10 o’clock.

I: And you call them Y-leaves?

P: Y-Leads.

I: Oh.

P: They’re youth development seminars.

I: Oh, got you. Y-Lead. No. 10, if you grew up with some experiences in agriculture, would you describe them as positive or negative, and why would you describe them that way?

P: Most of my dealings with agriculture was through 4-H so it was all positive.

I: Mm-hm.

P: I mean, not in the traditional agriculture sense, but 4-H was an agent of change in agriculture since the 19, since its inception in the 1900s. Um, youth teaching adults how to learn a better way, basically.

I: Mm-hm.

P: Back then, typically the research done in universities, farmers weren’t really that open
to listening to it, um, and they used youth as agent of change through the 4-H program, so. Not in the traditional sense, but yes, yes.

I: Mm-hm. No. 11, do you talk about agriculture with the people and consumers you interact with on a regular basis at work or with people you see during the week?

P: No.

I: Ok. Um, 12: if you talk about agriculture with consumers, what types of subjects related to agriculture typically come up in conversation?

P: I don’t, really.

I: Ok. No. 13, and we may just want to skip this one, but I’ll just go ahead and say it: if you talk with consumers about agriculture, do you usually initiate these conversations?

P: Uh, no. Not applicable.

I: Um, we’ll go through. The next few ones, I don’t know if they will be applicable, but I’ll say them. Fourteen: do you talk about agriculture with people who mostly grew up in rural or urban areas? Um, 15 …

P: Uh, I mean, any conversation is primarily with people who grew up in urban areas.

I: Ok. Um, do consumers ever ask you questions about agriculture? Or food, or things like that?

P: Uh, what do you mean by consumer?

I: Um, basically the people around you because everyone is a consumer, cause we all consume food.

P: Ok, I understand. Um, yeah, I mean, the conversation, it comes up in conversation. Usually, uh, it’s nice to actually have an intelligent conversation about it because you know, going to Ohio State, and taking the classes about it, so yes.

I: Mm-hm.

P: What was the second part, I’m sorry.

I: No, you’re fine. Um, it was: do consumers ask you questions about agriculture, if so, what kinds of questions do they ask?
P: Oh, I actually get all, all sorts of questions because I live in the city, or what I consider the city being somebody from the country. Um, so I get asked questions about agriculture all the time because everybody I’m currently around are all, you know, they grew up in the suburbs, and that sort of thing. They have no, uh, no real sense of, no real understanding of how things work in rural communities. But here’s a funny example.

I: Yeah.

P: My wife’s mother actually believed that horses pooped out babies.

I: Oh.

P: So there’s an example [laughs]. We’re talking more general agriculture type questions, but often, I’m the person that has those answers [laughs].

I: Right. So, and going back then, when this, when those kind of conversations about agriculture, food, since you are living in a more urban area, like do the people around you usually initiate those questions or do you bring it up?

P: Uh, typically, they, I mean, they’ll bring it up because they know I grew up in what they, I mean, my parents’ house, for what they consider, is a farm, even though there’s no farm. The big garden in the backyard is a farm compared to, to what they think.

I: Mm-hm.

P: The same way I think I live in the city, and I live in the suburbs. They say, ‘No, the city is downtown Chicago.’ I say, ‘No, no, the city stops when the concrete stops.’

I: [laughs] That’s actually a funny way of putting it [laughs]. Um, so how do you res--., and this is kind of a sub-question of No. 15: how do you respond when they ask you questions? Do you enjoy answering their questions, or does it feel more like a chore?

P: I’d say I enjoy it. I mean, I work in education so any time I get to enlighten someone, it makes me happy.

I: Yeah. Can you give me any examples of conversations you’ve had?

P: Um, the best way to plant tomatoes, just simple things, mostly. That cows have four stomachs.

I: Hm.
P: Just things like that.

I: Ok.

P: Like, one time I explained that they have educational, they have cows that they actually make a hole in the side and you can stick your hand in the room and feel around feel around, and that sort of thing, and they were … So basically, the stuff that people around agriculture all the time, the normal stuff, the people that aren’t are kind of in awe over, when they don’t realize the amount of effort and work and all that sort of stuff that goes into it.

I: Mm-hm. Uh, No. 16: do you feel qualified to answer questions about agriculture from the consumers around you?

P: I, I mean, on a small scale, like I said. I operate from more a educational perspective, as opposed to a real life experience. I didn’t grow up on a farm, but I took the classes, so I have knowledge, but not the personal experience.

I: Sure. Um, No. 17: do you believe it’s important to talk to consumers about agriculture?

P: I mean, yeah, anything that, um, something that is being tested. Um, more and more family farms, get smaller and smaller, you know. It’s turning into big agriculture, the family farm and small farms going away. Or if it isn’t, the people that work it have to have second jobs so it’s getting smaller because they don’t have time to work it because they can’t afford to, you know, have that be their primary mode of income.

I: Mm-hm. Um, No. 18: are there any messages or topics that you believe that farmers or the agricultural community are not educating consumers about?

P: Uh, personally, um, I think that a lot of people are afraid of GMOs. I personally don’t understand why I advocate for them, at the international and national level, I mean, you can produce more corn to feed more people. That’s what needs to be done, but that’s just personal opinion.

I: Mm-hm. Um, my next question: so in your opinion, what would be a good way for farmers to interact with or talk with consumers about agriculture?

P: Um, I’d say keeping it surface level. The second you go in-depth, I think, um, it leads to people around, you kind of lose them because they don’t have the baseline knowledge to really comprehend the conversation.

I: So really, don’t go into too much detail, just kind of keep it …
P: Yeah. You’ve got to build a base. So if you’re around the same people all the time, you can start having, you have to start with the more simple things and work your way up.

I: Mm-hm. Do you have any examples of you doing that with the people around you?

P: Um, well, like having a conversation about the whole process of, you know, farm to, farm to plate kind of thing. Um, just, tell them in pieces. That way they’re more receptive.

I: And my next question, NAME, do you have any recommendations on how farmers could reach out to people who are not directly connected to agriculture?

P: Um, I would say just whenever people talk, um, or whenever you’re around people that aren’t in that world, so to speak, just to introduce it in everyday conversation.

I: Mm-hm. Um, and No. 21: what do you believe is the greatest obstacle for farmers interacting with consumers who are no longer directly connected to agriculture?

P: Uh, culture. Things are, I mean, rural life and urban life are two totally different things. Everything from how you plan your day to what’s available at the grocery stores. I mean, it’s a totally different atmosphere. Totally different pace of life as well.

I: Mm-hm. Um, and NAME, while I have you on here, so did you grow up in a suburb, or did you grow up like out in the country?

P: I grew up in the country. My parents had 10 acres, half of it was a field they leased to the neighbor. Um, closest neighbor was, you know, a half mile away, kind of area, with the fields.

I: Yeah. And NAME, No. 22: is there anything I didn’t ask about that you wanted to add to the conversation?

P: No.

I: Ok, I think that’s all my questions. So thank you for your time.
Transcript of Interview with Participant 10 on Wednesday, March 4, 2015, at 3:05 p.m. I already read her the verbal script.

I: Ok, NAME, it is 3:05 on Wednesday, March 4th. I can’t believe it’s March 4th already [laughs]. Um, and I will go ahead and get started with some of the demographic questions, ok?

P: Ok.

I: Um, first, what is your occupation or job title?

P: Uh, I just switched jobs, now I am a grower at a greenhouse range.

I: Oh, at greenhouse range?

P: Uh-huh.

I: Oh, neat. Um, where do you live?

P: Estes Park, Colorado.

I: Ok. And then, uh, can you describe where you live? Like do you live in a house, an apartment, a condo?

P: Uh, we are currently living in a single residence house.

I: Ok. Um, the next question: how old are you?

P: I’m 51.

I: And what was your major and minor in during college at Ohio State?

P: I graduated from the agricultural college, and my major was greenhouse management and production.

I: Oh, and what year did you graduate?

P: 1983.

I: Ok. And did you return to Ohio State for graduate work?

P: I did not.
I: Ok. Well those are the demographic questions so now we’ll go into the list of 22. Um, so, the first question is: where you grow up?

P: I grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio, the suburbs.

I: Ok. Um, did you, um, I guess which parts—what part of Cincinnati?

P: The west side. In NAME.

I: Oh, NAME, is that what you said?

P: NAME. It’s, it’s a suburb of Cincinnati on the west side.

I: Oh, very good.

P: Mm-hm.

I: Um, did you have any connection to agriculture growing up?

P: Uh, my grandpa had a farm.

I: Where was his farm located?

P: Northern Kentucky.

I: Oh sure. So that probably wasn’t too far away from you, right?

P: No, uh-uh.

I: Ok. Um, and since of these questions may or may not apply, so if they don’t, we can just skip pass them. Um, and then, my third question is: if you grew up in a rural community, did you grow up on a grain farm or a farm where livestock was raised?

P: Uh, I did not grow up on a farm, but I currently operate my husband’s family cattle ranch.

I: Very neat. Ok. I’ll probably be asking you more questions about that in a little bit. Um, No. 4, what were the occupations of your parents?

P: My mom was a, she was a stay-at-home mom, and my dad was in finance.

I: Oh, ok. Um, No. 5, if you grew up on a farm after graduating from Ohio State, did you
end up returning to the rural community where you grew up, or did you move somewhere else? Um …

P: I’m … That’s not really applicable. I did not grow up on our ranch, so …

I: Right. And, I’ll go ahead and read this next one, that one, I apologize, this one isn’t applicable, either. Um, but I’ll go ahead and read it so you know what it is. If you grew up on a farm, did you ever think of returning to work on the farm you grew up on, or by starting your own farm?

P: Not applicable.

I: Ok. No. 7, what do you think is the main reason students do not move back to a rural community after graduating from a college like Ohio State?

P: Why they do not?

I: Mm-hm.

P: …. Move back?

I: Yes.

P: Uh, I think, too many times, growing up in agriculture or a small farm, you don’t have a lot of opportunities, and you see on TV how the other side lives, and I think too many people think the grass is greener. And so, they don’t wind up returning until after they have some life experience.

I: Mm-hm. Um, my next question: while you were a student at Ohio State, did your classes teach you about how to talk to consumers about agriculture?

P: Yes.

I: If yes, what did you learn?

P: Um, up until I went to, to college, I had no idea how difficult it was to raise, um, particularly, livestock. And, you know, what effort that the farmers have to go to in order to produce, um, you know, food for our world.

I: Mm-hm. Oh sure. Um, and then, the kind of the sub-question that goes along with that: if yes, do you—I mean, if yes, they did teach you about how to talk to consumers about agriculture, have you found that knowledge helpful as an adult?
P: I have.

I: Ok. Um, is your current job in the agriculture field?

P: Uh, I would say yes.

I: Ok. Um, the sub-question with that is: explain what your connection to agriculture is in your job?

P: Well, currently, we grow, um, mostly holiday pot plants, um, nursery stock, and or annuals, so it’s basically for the consumers.

I: Mm-hm. What does a typical day look like for you?

P: Uh. A typical day would be, in the morning, depending on the time of the year, checking on all of the, the crops to make sure they did or did not need water, and then mostly potting, and then as we get into, and then continue to watch them grow, and then as we get into season, selling those products.

I: Mm-hm. Ok. So, how large is your green—so, is it—how large is your greenhouse business?

P: Uh, it is not my business. I’m an employee.

I: Oh, ok.

P: Um, and I would say probably 17, 18 acres under glass.


P: Yeah.

I: Yeah.

P: Yeah.

I: So you say you farm with your husband, is that right? You guys have cattle?

P: Yes, yes, we do. Mm-hm.

I: Great. So how many do you have?
P: Well, that, that’s kind of a strange question.

I: [laughs]

P: Um, we used to run about 65 mom and babe pairs, um, but we lost a lot of our animals in a wildfire in 2012, so we are in a process of regrowing our stock, so currently we have 18 animals. We have a bull and then we have some heifers and some moms, and we are about to start calving any day now.

I: Oh wow. That’s great.

P: Mm-hm.

I: So if, I’m so sorry, and I apologize, I must’ve misheard, is this a dairy operation, then?

P: No, it’s beef cattle.

I: Beef cattle, ok.

P: Mm-hm.

I: Wow. I’m so sorry you guys lost cattle in the, in a wildfire.

P: Yeah, it was pretty awful.

I: Oh man, I can’t imagine. Um, ok, and do you guys have any like grain or anything, or is it basically the cattle?

P: Uh, cattle and then during the summer into early fall, we also hay our fields.

I: Oh, sure. Very good. Uh, well, thanks for kind of letting me go off and get some details. Um, my next question would be No. 10: if you grew up with some experiences in agriculture, would you describe them as positive or negative, and why would you describe them that way?

P: Um, my growing up, I, I would help my grandpa during the summer months when they were doing some harvesting. And it just gave me an idea, as a child, of what fresh, you know, fresh food actually tasted like.

I: Mm-hm. What did your grandpa grow?

P: Uh, he grew mostly corn …
I: Mm-hm …

P: But then he did grow some tomatoes and strawberries.

I: Very good. Ok. Um, No. 11, do you talk about agriculture with the people and consumers you interact with on a regular basis at work, or with people you see during the week?

P: Actually, uh, I do. There’s a lot of interest, um, because our, our beef is uh, uh, grain fed, uh, it’s all natural. You know, with all the push right now toward being natural and, and you know, chemical-free …

I: Mm-hm.

P: So we do talk quite a bit about our beef to people.

I: Sure. And did you say they were grain-fed or grass-fed?

P: Grass-fed.

I: Grass-fed, ok. So how many acres do you guys have?

P: Uh, 860.

I: Wow. So they have 860 acres to roam? Or is it …

P: Um, yeah, for the most part. We’ve got 860 acres that’s in the middle of the Forest Service, and so they don’t get to roam that, except during the summer months. They’ll go up there while we’re doing the haying production.

I: Ok, oh, very neat. No. 12: if you talk about agriculture with consumers, what types of subjects related to agriculture typically come up in conversation?

P: Um, basically, when I’m, I’m talking about people, we’ll talk, we’re talking beef, and we’re generally just talking about, is it safe, and, and all the different chemicals you will find in beef in the, in the general course of buying food through a supermarket.

I: Mm-hm. If you talk with consumers about agriculture, do you usually initiate those conversations?

P: Yes.
I: Ok, um if …

P: I enjoy talking to children. I’ll ask them if they know where meat comes from.

I: Oh.

P: And they’ll say the grocery store [laughs].

I: Ok … [laughs].

P: It’s very disturbing to me that the American public has absolutely no idea what a farmer does, or what a rancher does, and where food comes from. We’ve gotten so accustomed to buying food or eating out that young kids today aren’t raised with any kind of knowledge of what agriculture is. To me, that’s very disturbing.

I: Mm-hm. Um, so that was kind of my sub-question was: if yes, why do you choose to initiate those conversations? Um …

P: Oh, ok [laughs].

I: I feel like you answered that. Um, another one I have is: if you do initiate these conversations, are people usually pretty receptive to talking about agriculture?

P: Um … Yeaaaa---uuuuuu. I think I do more listening than actually talking. Um, and I don’t know if they care to listen to me pontificate, but I do just the same.

I: Mm-hm.

P: So, I, I guess, I would say for the most part, no, they’re generally not all that interested. But they, they appease me.

I: [laughs]. Um, No. 14: do you talk about agriculture with people who mostly grew up in rural, urban or suburban areas?

P: Mostly rural.

I: Ok. And then No. 15: do consumers ask you questions about agriculture, and if yes, what kind of questions do they ask?

P: Um, you know, it’s not a, a conversation that people generally start, um, but, uh, I, I will talk about it if people ask me.
I: Mm-hm.

P: And I, you know, occasionally, the subject will come up without me bringing it up. But, nine times out of 10, it’s myself bringing it up.

I: Mm-hm. Um, so, kind of a sub-question that goes along with that, um: how do you respond when they ask you questions—and you may have kind of already answered this—and do you enjoy answering their questions, or does it feel more like a chore?

P: Oh, no, I enjoy it.

I: Ok. No. 16: do you feel qualified to answer questions about agriculture from the consumers around you? Why or …

P: I do.

I: Ok, um, why or why not?

P: Um, why, I guess because I’ve had experience, you know, throughout the years, both on our, our farm, uh, our ranch, and my grandpa’s farm. So I think I’ve got some education and real-life experience in addition to, um, my education, I think is helpful, and having a lot of friends in agriculture.

I: Mm-hm. Um, and then: can you share any specific examples of conversations that have occurred between you and consumers?

P: Other than the ones I’ve already mentioned, nothing really pops to mind.

I: Ok. Um, No. 17: do you believe it is important to talk to consumers about agriculture?

P: I certainly do. If, if, if the general population doesn’t understand the, the, the plight of the farmer and the rancher, then we’re going to be depending on the rest of the world for our food, and people just don’t get … Most cityfolk don’t get that. That’s as plain as I can say it. And if there isn’t some awareness brought to agricultural woes of this country, we’re in big trouble, as far as I’m concerned.

I: Mm-hm. My next question, No. 18: are there any messages or topics that you believe farmers or the agricultural community are not educating consumers about?

P: Um, you know, I don’t hear a lot about water rights, and I think that that’s something that is very important for people to understand, and I think the majority of the population has absolutely no idea what water rights are all about.
I: Hm. Uh, I guess, how would you define those? Or do you want to go into a little more detail with that?

P: Well, I don’t know, um, how familiar you are with the way things are in the West, but I mean, you, you do not own your water, even if it’s on your property. And it’s very … The water that a farmer or rancher is able to use is very regulated.

I: Mm-hm.

P: And so if the water table is low, and you’re in a drought situation, um, you know, the cities will get the water prior to your … Even if you have, you know, certain rights, the, you’ll be restricted in your water. And, that’s just extremely difficult when you’re trying to grow crops.

I: Wow.

P: … During the summer months, particularly, in drought situations. And we’ve seen that in the West, you know, for the last, what, five years. And it’s just been, it’s been heartwrenching, you know.

I: Mm-hm. So, are you saying you don’t own the water, even when it’s on your land?

P: Yeah. You don’t own your water. Yeah. I mean, if it’s in a stream or a lake, um, you know, you can obviously have permits to build ponds, and then you have access to that water, but most of the water that is necessary either comes from a river or a stream that is coming through your land.

I: Hm.

P: And so it’s illegal to, you know, stop it up or, or to use that water without written permission.

I: So what do you guys end up doing for your livestock and your crops?

P: Um, we’re fairly fortunate, because where our ranch is located in the mountains, we have, uh, several natural springs that come through, and so we’re able to use that water as it’s running through. So, the animals are able to drink as it’s coming through.

I: Ok. Oh my gosh, yeah, that’d be …

P: So the natural springs are in a little bit of a different category than, uh, rivers and streams.
I: Ok. So they’re not quite as regulated, then?

P: Correct.

I: Ok. Oh, wow. That is such an interesting perspective, I’m so glad you brought that up. I don’t think anyone else has talked about that.

P: Mm-hm.

I: Um, are there any other messages or topics that you think farmers or the ag community needs to talk more about?

P: Um, the other thing that would come to mind immediately is the, the ability for ranchers and farmers, um, to acquire business loans. Um, you just, you just don’t see it anymore. I mean, years ago, you could put up your ranchland and you could, you know, work a deal with the bank. These days, that is so incredibly difficult to do. And with being a, the neces--uh, necessary equipment, whether it be a combine or a tractor or baler, you know, you need that equipment. And it’s extremely difficult for ranchers and farmers to acquire loans right now.

I: Mm-hm.

P: So I think that, I think that is, is, something that, if the public were aware, maybe there might be some change somewhere in the near future.

I: Mm-hm. So just more of the price of things, or just more of the ability to get loans to pay for things?

P: The ability … Well, yeah, both, but the more important thing is, you know, the ability to get a loan.

I: Mm-hm. Uh, my next question: in your opinion, what would be a good way for farmers to interact with or talk with consumers about agriculture?

P: [laughs] That’s the million dollar question. You know what, I really don’t know. Um, short of social media and, and actual television programs, I just don’t know, because um … Our young people, and, and even some, you know, early generation adults, they just don’t care. Um, you know. They’re, they’re living a life of convenience, and they just aren’t bothered about such things that they’re not involved in. And so how do you get that, that clie—that, uh, population to be involved, I, I wish I knew. I, I, I haven’t figured it out.
I: Mm-hm. Um, No. 20: do you have any recommendations on how farmers could reach out to people who are not directly connected to agriculture?

P: [laughs] Like an honest politician, I’ll make it part of this platform [little hard to understand toward the end].

I: [laughs] Um, and then No. 21: what do you believe is the greatest obstacle for farmers interacting with consumers who are no longer directly connected to agriculture?

P: What’s the biggest obstacle?

I: Mm-hm.

P: Oh, ignorance.

I: Mm.

P: And, you know, not having education.

I: Mm-hm. Do you want to elaborate a little more?

P: Well, I just, I, I, I just sort of… may repeat myself a little bit … But I think, you know, these days, the amount of history that our, that our kids are learning in school—they’re not getting it. They, they sort of blush over, you know, the real needs of America, Americans and survival, meaning growing crops [laughs] and food. It’s just, it’s just not something that is deemed important anymore. Um … You know, kids are more focused on technology, and, and, uh, you know, and, um, finance.

I: Mm-hm.

P: They just don’t have the interest, you know, that there once was.

I: Mm-hm. Ok. And my last question, and then I have a few questions I want to go back and ask you, but 22: is there anything I didn’t ask about that you wanted to add?

P: Uh, nothing jumps into my mind at the moment, no.

I: Ok, well, one of my follow-up questions: how did you get out to … I mean, I guess, what made you go to Colorado and start farming?

P: [laughs].

I: … I mean, from being from Cincinnati, I’m very curious.
P: Well, um, when I was quite young, I think I was five or six years old, um, my parents took us on a vacation, family vacation, to Colorado. And I fell in love with it, and we used to go to guest ranches, um, for a period of time when I was young. And one of the, the guest ranches that we had stayed at, the gentleman was going to close his, his property, and he said, ‘You seem to enjoy this an awful lot, your family, have you ever thought about ranching, you know, and buying my ranch?’ And so, the seed was sort of planted. We wound up not buying that ranch, but we did buy a guest ranch out in Colorado, and as it turns out, it was a neighboring ranch to my husband’s ranch, and I met and married him and we stayed there [laughs]. So, here we are!

I: Wait, so how old were you when you guys bought the ranch? Like, did your family buy that, or did you buy it?

P: Yup, no, it was my mom and dad and myself, and my two sisters weren’t interested. One was married and one was too young and had no interest. And that was probably, I was in my early twenties.

I: So after Ohio State, then, right?

P: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

I: Wow. Did your parents move out there, too?

P: They did for a few years, and then my mom, um, had health conditions, and so, it became difficult for her to live and work at the altitude that we lived at. And so they moved back to the Cincinnati area, they actually settled down on a small farm, um, in eastern Indiana, western Cincinnati area, right on the border of Indiana and Ohio. And of course, my husband and I stayed on.

I: Wow.

P: And, uh, as I alluded to, my husband’s, uh, it … the cattle ranch was my husband’s family’s cattle ranch, and my mother-in-law was killed in that same wildfire that I spoke about. And so, he and I have been managing their ranch in addition to our own livelihood [laughs] for the last three years, and my son will graduate from high school in May, and we will move to the ranch and that will be our, our full-time employment.

I: Oh, wow. So wait, which wildfire was it?

P: Um, the NAME fire.

I: Oh my gosh.
P: Yeah.

I: And your mother-in-law died? I am so sorry.

P: Yeah. It was in 2012. DATE it started and it started on a property that was about 5 miles, I mean 3 miles, behind our property. And it just sort of—raged.

I: … How much …

P: It was a phenom—it was a phenomenon, so, it burned probably three-quarters of our ranch, as far as the trees, and we had nine structures—seven are gone. So …

I: Wow.

P: It was truly a, truly a rebirth and remaking and whatever else you want to call it.

I: Wow. So are you guys more in town, then, or are you still kind of out in the count--like …

P: Right now, we’re in a small town in, um, the foothills of Colorado.

I: Ok.

P: So, we’re, we’re about 15 miles from where the ranch is, but as the crow flies so [laughs] …

I: Oh [laughs].

P: … So we get there in about an hour and 5 minutes cause you have to go down one canyon and up another.

I: Oh my gosh, wow. That could take some time ([laughs]. But you guys are going to move after your son graduates, you guys are going to move to the ranch itself?

P: Mm-hm.

I: How interesting. Um, ok. Um, well, is there anything that you wanted to mention?

KS: I don’t think so.

I: Ok.

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Transcript of Interview with Participant 11 on Wednesday, March 10, 2015, at 7:55 a.m. I already read him the verbal script.

I: Ok, NAME, I’m recording, um, and NAME, I just kind of want to start out with some demographic questions. So what is your occupation or job title?

P: Um, sales for Bobcat in Pittsburgh so we sell the Bobcat construction equipment.

I: Ok. Um, where do you live?

P: Um, western Pennsylvania.

I: Ok. Um, describe where you live now. Do you live in a house, an apartment, a condo?

P: In a home.

I: Ok. My next question: how old are you?

P: 58.

I: Ok. What was your major and minor in during college at Ohio State?

P: Horticulture.

I: Ok. Uh, what year did you graduate?

P: ‘79.

I: Ok. Did you return to Ohio State for graduate work?

P: No.

I: Ok. Um, NAME, I have a list of, the next ones are, it’s basically 21 or 22 questions, but I think a lot of them is: if you grew up on a farm, that kind of thing, so we should get through this pretty quickly. But the first one is: to begin, where did you grow up?

P: Cincinnati, Ohio.

I: Ok. Did you have any connection to agriculture growing up?

P: We grew up, I grew up in the city, but we were always out in the country and then we had some people that had farms and that that we went to. So, I was somewhat familiar
growing up, with agriculture.

I: Sure. Were they like family friends?

P: Yes.

I: Very good. And then No. 3, I’ll, and some of these, I’ll just go ahead and ask, but if it’s not applicable, we’ll just move on. If you grew up in a rural community, did you live on a grain farm or a farm where livestock were raised?

P: No.

I: No. 4, what were the occupations of your parents?

P: Engineer and homemaker.

I: Ok. No. 5, if you grew up on a farm, after graduating from Ohio State, did you end up returning to the rural community where you grew up, or did you move somewhere else?

P: That’s not, doesn’t apply, cause I didn’t grow up on a farm.

I: Sure. So, No. 6 won’t either, but I’ll go ahead and say it so you know kind of the questions I’ve been asking. If you grew up on a farm, did you ever think of returning to work on the farm you grew up on or by starting your own farm? Um, but then, NAME, No. 7: what do you think is the main reason students do not move back to a rural community after graduating from a college like Ohio State?

P: Oh, I don’t know. I guess I can’t answer that question.

I: Ok, um, that’s fine. No. 8: while you were a student at Ohio State, did your classes teach you about how to talk to consumers about agriculture?

P: Well, no, I guess not, really.

I: Ok.

P: Um, I was in horticulture, and we, of course, some of the basis of the classes were agriculture and horticulture together, you know.

I: Uh, what made you decide to major in horticulture?

P: Well, I originally came for forestry and switched to horticulture.
I: Oh.

P: So I’ve been, I don’t know. We were always doing things outside so that’s what I went to.

I: Ok. Um, No. 9: is your current job in the agriculture field?

P: Uh, well, partially, you know, it’s part of the business.

I: Mm-hm. What do you do with your position?

P: I sell Bobcat compact equipment so we sell it to just homeowners all the way through industry through colleges, universities, municipal accounts, agriculture, landscape, so …

I: Wow. Ok, um, and then kind of the sub-question with that, you already kind of talked on that was: if yes, can you explain what your connection to agriculture is in your job?

P: Oh, well, I directly sell the equipment.

I: Ok. And then, another sub-question with that: what does a typical day look like for you?

P: Oh, well, I’ve been doing paperwork for two hours now, and then I’ll go, I have to go to Slippery Rock University this morning to show them a piece of equipment and then meet a couple of contractors, so I’m not calling on anybody in agriculture today.

I: Ok. Wow, how long do you work then?

P: I drive around.

I: If you started at …

P: I drive around and I haul equipment.

I: Very good. Um, well, No. 10: if you grew up with some experience in agriculture, or some experiences in agriculture, would you describe them as positive or negative, and why would you describe them that way?

P: Well, positive, because, you know, we enjoyed being outside hunting and fishing, and, you know, being on the farm and um, just something else we learned to do as kids.

I: Oh yeah. No. 11: do you talk about agriculture with the people and consumers you
interact with on a regular basis at work or with people you see during the week?

P: Yes.

I: Ok. If yes, how often do these conversations occur with consumers?

P: Uh, I don’t know. That’s a … Usually when you meet a … In my line of work, when I meet somebody, you usually talk about what they do in their business, and not something else. … With an agricultural account, I’ll talk about agriculture, but if I went to a landscape account or a construction account, you know, it’s all different.

I: Mm-hm. No. 12: if you talk about agriculture with consumers, what types of subjects related to agriculture typically come up in conversation?

[Call was disconnected so the interviewer called him back.]

I: Ok, so did you hear that last question, or did you want me to repeat it?

P: I guess repeat it.

I: Ok. No. 12: if you talk about agriculture with consumers, what types of subjects related to agriculture typically come up in conversation?

P: Huh, well, I guess, you’re throwing me off when you’re saying consumers, yeah, I guess I don’t know how to answer that question.

I: Um, I guess with this, I’m thinking more consumers as far as just people who eat food, so, I mean, that would pretty much be everybody.

P: Oh. I see.

I: It’s kind of neat cause you have … I mean, you work for Bobcat so you work with a lot of different types of people, um …

P: Right.

I: So if you just want to talk about, if you talk about, I mean, if it’s food, you know, talking with like neighbors or whatever, or if it’s talking with farmers about different Bobcat equipment, it can, you can answer that however you’d like.

P: Uh, well, I guess move on. I’m drawing a blank on that one.
I: Ok. No. 13: if you talk with consumers about agriculture, do you usually initiate these conversations?

P: Well, huh. If I’m, hm.

I: And did you want to …

P: I guess, well, you end up having conversations, you know, about the government and politics and uh, the economy, and of course, that’s involved with everything. So I guess I don’t necessarily, if the conversation comes up with somebody, um, it’s not necessarily that ok, we’re just talking about, you know, meat and pork and chickens and the grains and where food comes from and all that. It’s just usually not in the conversation, you know.

I: Mm-hm. NAME, No. 14: do you talk about agriculture with people who mostly grew up in rural or urban or suburban areas?

P: Well, probably on the rural end.

I: Mm-hm. My next question …

P: Now NAME, my wife, goes to a, um, school, and it’s a industrial area school, and of course, the topic comes up, those kids have no clue where stuff comes from [laughs].

I: Mm-hm. What is she going to school for? Or is she teaching?

JM: She’s a librarian at an elementary school, correct.

I: Very good. Um …

P: But, yeah, I understand what you’re trying to accomplish, um, you know, because people have no clue. It’s just kind of dumbfounding to me that people don’t have an interest, don’t have a clue what happens and what goes on.

I: Mm-hm. Um, my next question, NAME, and again, this may not apply, and if it doesn’t, we’ll just skip to the next one, but No. 15: do consumers ask you questions about agriculture?

P: Well, if I’m in an industrial account, probably not. If I’m in my line of, you know, Bobcat, if I’m in agricultural, stuff comes up about that, you know, but not someone typically that is not from the agricultural end.
I: Mm-hm. My next question is: do you feel qualified to answer questions about agriculture from the consumers around you?

P: Oh sure.

I: Mm-hm. The sub-question with that is: why or why not?

P: Well, I guess I, I’m fortunate that I have a very broad background in all different avenues of life, and different occupations and that. So I understand a lot of that, people didn’t grow up broad-based like myself, or, not to say that they’re narrow-minded, but you know, that their interests sometimes are narrow-minded.

I: Mm-hm. No. 17: do you believe it’s important to talk to consumers about agriculture?

P: Oh sure.

I: Ok, um, the sub-question with that: if so, why do you think it’s important?

P: Well, we have—have you heard of Marcellus shale?

I: Mm-hm.

P: Well, that’s the issue here in western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio, and you know, people don’t grasp what happens with energy and why we need energy, and, and uh, so it’s just uh, the same topic of agriculture. Some people don’t have any clue what it takes to do the business of agriculture.

I: Mm-hm. No. 18: are there any messages or topics that you believe that farmers or the agricultural community are not um, educating or informing consumers about?

P: Well, there’s a whole big dynamic of energy, and it takes energy to survive as a person, as a country, and then of course, farmers are using quite a bit of energy to do what they need to do, and there’s the whole environmental issue of water-controlled um, erosion, soil erosion and all of that. People need to understand that totally. My contention, a little bit sometimes, is that the agricultural industry does something that the building, construction industry can’t do, and they’re not on the same page there. Mainly, you know, water runoff on a piece of property.

I: Mm-hm.

P: If it’s a piece of agricultural property, they have different parameters than if it’s a piece of commercial property that they’re going to build on, on what the guidelines are
for soil and water erosion.

I: Mm-hm.

P: And they both need to be on the same page because they both affect the same thing.

I: Mm-hm. Um, my next question, and actually, I’m glad you shared that, that’s something new, I haven’t heard that while I’ve been doing these. In your opinion, what would be a good way for farmers to interact with or talk with consumers about agriculture?

P: Well, somehow the agricultural industry has to be joined with the building industry and the construction industry because they’re both dealing with, you know, Mother Earth, if you want to say it that way, and where developments can be, where waste waters can go, from, either from human waste or industrial waste water and then agricultural waste, animal waste, and um. They just need to be all on the same page there so that everyone’s working with the same parameters.

I: Mm-hm. No. 20: do you have any recommendations on how farmers could reach out to people who are not directly connected to agriculture?

P: Hm. I guess I don’t know.

I: That’s ok. Um, my second to last question, you’re almost done. What do you believe is the greatest obstacle for farmers interacting with consumers who are no longer directly connected to agriculture?

P: Hm. Well, we have the whole logistics of urbanization, um, and then you know, people never grew up outside the city, um, but they don’t quite understand. I mean, there’s all kind of, you’re in some of the-- a little more, what do I want to say? Up and coming areas where they have all of the little mini marts, uh, mini markets, you know, that are in the park, trying to educate people. And then some of that’s good, but then also, some of that’s bad because it’s not looking at the big, big picture of agribusiness, you know. Someone’s growing carrots in their backyard, bring it to the curb market, well you know, yes, that’s going to feed a few people, but you also have to understand the dynamics of what it takes to feed billions of people.

I: Ok. And then, 22: is there anything I didn’t ask about that you wanted to mention?

P: No, I guess not [laughs].

I: And, NAME, I know you have to go pretty soon, but real quick, how did you end up in
Pittsburgh?

P: Um, well, we went, we went via New England, and then my wife was from western Pennsylvania so we came back here.

I: Oh, very good. So how much, do you typically sell to farmers, or is it more industry, I mean, construction workers, that kind of thing?

P: I would say, yeah, the agricultural industry is a smaller part of my direct business.

I: Mm-hm. And NAME, there wasn’t anything else you wanted to add?

P: No, I think I’m good. If I think of something else, I’ll send you a note or something.
Transcript of Interview with Participant 12 on Wednesday, March 10, 2015, at 8 a.m. I already read her the verbal script.

I: Ok, NAME, I’m recording. So, I will go ahead and start by asking you some of those demographic questions. Um, the first one is: what is your occupation or job title?

P: Um, I’m just a stay-at-home mom. Homemaker.

I: Oh sure. Where do you live?

P: We live in NAME, Georgia.

I: Oh wow, very neat. And then describe where you live now. Do you live in a house, an apartment, a condo, or a farmhouse?

P: We live in a house in a subdivision.

I: Ok. Um, the next question is: how old are you?

P: 35.

I: Ok.

P: No, 36, I’m 36.

I: Oh no, you’re fine. And what was your major and minor in during college at Ohio State?

P: It was, animal science was my major.

I: Did you have a minor?

P: What?

I: Did you have a minor?

P: I did, but I don’t remember what it is.

I: No, that’s fine. Um, and then what year did you graduate from Ohio State?

I: Ok. And then, um, my last demographic question: did you return to Ohio State for graduate work?

P: No.

I: Ok, NAME, those are all the demographic questions, and now we’ll go ahead and start with the list of 22, of like the main interview questions.

P: Ok.

I: No. 1 is: To begin, where did you grow up?

P: Um, I grew up in NAME, Ohio.

I: What county is that in?

P: It’s Wood County.

I: Oh, very good. Um, No. 2: did you have any connection to agriculture growing up?

P: Yeah, I grew up on a small family farm.

I: Oh, very good. Um, if you grew up in a rural community, did you live on a grain farm or a farm where livestock were raised?

P: We had both.

I: Ok, so could you tell me a little more about what, or more details about that, such as how many acres or what you raised?

P: I can’t remember the exact acres that my dad did. There was like 17 acres of his own, but he also, when we were children, he cash-leased …

I: Oh sure.

P: … More property, but I don’t know how much that is. He doesn’t do that anymore. So he raised soybeans, corn, wheat and then we would get the hay and stuff in the summer. Then we had horses, chickens, we had some cattle, mostly just for our own personal use. Rabbits, at one point in time so there was a whole range of things.

I: Oh wow. So did you—so were the cattle, I mean, were they beef cattle or dairy cattle?
P: Um, dairy cattle.

I: Oh, very good. Ok. I always admire people who are dairy farmers just because it is so time-intensive.

P: Yeah, they, before my brother and I were born, they had a big dairy farm, and they milked and did all of that, but then the blizzard of ’78, they had a lot of heifers get mastitis and get sick, and then it just kind of dwindled down from there. So we used them, we would raise them for meat or to sell, um, and we used a lot of them for 4-H projects.

I: Oh, very good. My next question: what were the occupations of your parents?

P: Um, my dad was a farmer and a truck driver …

I: Oh, ok.

P: And my mom was a church secretary and stayed home with us the rest of the time.

I: Oh, sure. So how many kids were there?

P: Just me and my brother.

I: Oh, very good.

P: Just the two of us.

I: No. 5: if you grew up on a farm, after graduating from Ohio State, did you end up returning to the rural community where you grew up, or did you move somewhere else?

P: I moved someplace else.

I: Ok. And then the sub-question with that: if you did not return to that same community, then where did you move? Did you move anywhere else between Ohio and Georgia?

P: Um, yes, it was to, out to Pennsylvania. West Chester, Pennsylvania, which is a suburb of Philadelphia.

I: Oh. No. 6: if you grew up on a farm, did you ever think of returning to work on the farm you grew up on, or by starting your own farm?

P: Yeah, I’ve had the thought.
I: Mm-hm.

P: Yes. It just hasn’t worked out that way.

I: Sure. The sub-question with that: if you did move away after graduating, what kept you from returning to that rural community?

P: Um, it was, um, I got married, and my husband’s job took us to a different location.

I: Ok. No. 7: what do you think is the main reason students do not move back to a rural community after graduating from a college like Ohio State?

P: I just think that there’s, you know, like you said in the beginning, the amount of farms have dwindled down, and there’s, it’s just hard. And then it’s hard work. And I think that some people don’t want to go back to that hard work, either. I think just the … the opportunity that’s there is not as strong as the income they could get going elsewhere is probably a big part of it, or, they don’t want to go back to the hard work.

I: Mm-hm. Um, No. 8: while you were a student at Ohio State, did your classes teach you about how to talk to consumers about agriculture?

P: No, I wouldn’t say that really was a big part of it at all.

I: Ok. The sub-question with that is: if no, did you wish they had taught you anything about talking to consumers about agriculture, or have you, I mean, done pretty well without that?

P: Yeah, I’ve done fairly well without that.

I: Ok, uh, my next question is: if your current job in the agriculture field?

P: No, mine is not.

I: Ok, No. 10: if you grew up with some experiences in agriculture, would you describe them as positive or negative, and why would you describe them that way?

P: Um, positive, because it gave me a good work ethic, and it allowed me to become educated to know where our food comes from, and the animals, how to support them. It was a very positive upbringing.

I: Mm-hm. And when you talked about 4-H, what did you do in 4-H?

P: Oh, uh, several things. I showed, um, several different animals. Started off with rabbits
and chickens, and then progressed through showing dairy cattle and goats and horses, then, were my ultimate thing that I showed the rest of the time.

I: Oh, wow. How many years did you show horses?

P: Oh, I started riding independently in third grade. Um, and then showed horses all the way through, I was 18, 19, and then, then I continued with and got a job with horses in therapeutic horseback riding when I graduated high school—or graduated college.

I: Is that when you moved to, like Pennsylvania?

P: When we, yeah, when we moved to Pennsylvania.

I: Oh. Were you married by that point?

P: Yeah, well, we got married right as we graduated college and moved to Pennsylvania, yeah.

I: Oh, very cool. I always love hearing what people did in 4-H. I just think that’s really cool.

P: Yeah, yeah. I was more the animal side of it. There is a whole other … animal, non-animal projects, but I never really, it was not my forte, it was not my interest.

I: Mm-hm. No. 11: do you talk about agriculture with the people and consumers you interact with on a regular basis at work or with people you see during the week?

P: Um, I do to an extent. It all just depends on the conversation around us. A lot of who I’m interacting with at this point are moms.

I: Mm-hm.

P: And with where we live, there’s not, people do have a negative thought, or I guess you could say, a negative attitude towards where our food comes from. And then how it’s processed and all of this, how it … everybody, it’s a negative connotation toward agriculture, you could say. This subdivision and the moms and the things that I interact with. So I talk to it, talk about it, and try to educate them as much as I can, um, but they definitely have a negative connotation about it. About food and ag—food, and our food supply and our food sources, because so many people are working towards going organic and how all of their—there’s all of this stuff in our food and how it’s processed and how all of that negativity is out there. And I just don’t feel like people are educated enough about how our food is processed. There are so many negative TV shows and news
programs and movies that it really diminishes that part of our life.

I: Mm-hm. And I’ll ask you, I’ll ask you more questions about that, NAME …

P: That’s fine.

I: No. 12: if you talk about agriculture with consumers, what types of subjects related to agriculture typically come up in conversation?

P: Uh, mostly ours come up, is related to food. That’s the majority of it. And how that affects us. And how, where, how, you know, where is milk, where does our milk come from? And all of the hormones, the different things that are in the milk and just trying to, you know, even just encourage people to read your labels, because the labels don’t, they’ll tell you what’s in it. So that’s one example, the hormones in the milk. Or they talk about the pesticides that are used and how bad they are. Um, so they’re not, they don’t necessarily understand the difference, because there’s still pesticides used, to an extent, with organic food. But they think, you know, it says organic, it’s so much better for you, no matter the cost. So there’s just not enough education out there. Or the word, the positive word is not as strong as the negative word towards the food, our food supply, and how animals are treated when they are being, going through the processing plant, and all of that. Which touches close to home because my husband works for a company, um, he works for Cargill, and he sells meat for them on a large scale quantity, so you know, it’s kind of, but that’s what most of our conversations relate around, is the food aspect of things.

I: Mm-hm. No. 13: if you talk with consumers about agriculture, do you usually initiate these conversations?

P: No, I don’t usually initiate them.

I: Ok. If you do not initiate them, is there a reason why you don’t?

P: Um, because of the connotation that they all have about it, if they bring it up, I will add information, or try to add a positive light to it. Otherwise, if anything comes up, it’s regarding horses. I may initiate a conversation about horses, therapeutic horseback riding, but other than that, I don’t really, because there’s not really a lot of interest, otherwise.

I: No. 14: do you talk about agriculture with people who mostly grew up in rural, urban, or suburban areas?

P: Uh, these people are definitely in, uh, urban areas.

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I: Ok …

P: Urban and suburban areas.

I: Ok. And then kind of the sub-question with that was: do you tend to talk about agriculture with one group more than another? So probably, like rural, urban, or suburban, more than another?

P: Probably when we travel to Ohio, and we’re there, we would probably talk more agricultural topics with our family and friends that live there, and they’re in a rural area, because it’s right smack dab in the middle of their life.

I: And the sub-question with that: if you do talk about agriculture, how receptive is each group about talking about agriculture?

P: Um, the rural, people that live in the rural atmosphere, or rural life, they are definitely more open than people living in urban and suburban …

I: Mm-hm.

P: Areas.

I: Mm-hm. No. 15: do consumers ask you questions about agriculture?

P: No, I wouldn’t say they come out and say specific questions, no.

I: Ok. Um, if it does come up in conversation and people ask you questions, do you enjoy answering their questions, or does it feel more like a chore?

P: No, it’s enjoyable to answer their questions until it gets to be where they’re putting the whole world of agriculture down, and it’s like, ‘okay,’ then you’re kind of like, um … It just starts to get uncomfortable when they put down, constantly, the part of your life that you--that is important to you--that you grew up with. And I try not to get into those conversations too much, or too deep into them if they don’t … Because I don’t want to give them wrong information, and you know, maintain, especially since we live someplace that we don’t know that many people [laughs]. Just to maintain a relationship. But I just try to educate them as well as I can, and then let them form their opinions otherwise.

I: Um, that kind of goes along with my next question: No. 16 is: do you feel qualified to answer questions about agriculture from the consumers around you? Why or why not?
P: It just depends on the topics in which they’re talking about, in depth. When it comes to animals, I am definitely comfortable answering lots of questions and going in depth with those because that’s what I grew up with. Um, when it comes to our crops and our food supply, yes to an extent, there is, but then I feel like I come back and I try to gather more information and teach myself even more before I go out. Cause I just want to make sure I give correct information. I don’t want to tell somebody something that’s not accurate.

I: Oh sure. Uh, do you have any other specific examples of conversations you want to share?

P: I’m trying to think if there’s anything … I can’t, all I can think. There’s one mom who had a conversation, we were talking, and she was expressing how her daughter was, she felt her daughter was developing faster because of the hormones in the milk that they drink, and, but I just tried to reiterate that they’re not allowed to use these hormones in the, our milk supply. Um, and to read your labels because it says specifically on there: not treated with these hormones. So that was one specific conversation that we had. And she was then stating that she had seen the movie, I think it’s called “Food, Inc.” which I have not seen. I don’t really know if I want to bring myself to watch it, just because from what they say, from what a couple people have heard watch it, is it definitely paints a very dark light of farmers and the way the animals are raised and all of that. And then how they’re treated going through processing and all of that kind of stuff. And that, I just … Part of me wishes that there would be more positive movies out there because I’m not going to say that I don’t feel that some of the negative stuff happens, I’m sure it does, with the way animals are treated, and this and that. I know it happens, but there’s so many things that dwell on that, and you have your animal rights groups that they dwell on that, and the media dwells on those issues rather than bringing the positive light forward, and the people that are doing it correctly. Because there’s bad people in everything in life. That’s just the way it is. The positive can be brought forward, and I really think there needs to be more education with that.

I: Um, No. 17: do you believe it’s important to talk to consumers about agriculture?

P: Yes.

I: Um, if so, why do you think it’s important?

P: I just, again, just to get the positive light and how, how what our farmers are doing is important for our food supply. And how, um … just the animals and how our food is processed in order for us to eat it, and helping educate people to go back to the way our grandparents used to prepare our food and go back to that. Preparing food on the dinner table in the evening needs to be more about the fresh foods and the foods you can get rather than all of the prepared stuff, with there being less and less farming happening,
people doing that, our food has taken, sort of a downturn, with all the processed foods.

I: Ok. And No. 18: are there any messages or topics that you believe that farmers or the agricultural community are not educating consumers about?

P: I mean, I don’t even know how … The farmers, I think, are trying their best. They’re busy with taking care of their day-to-day operations of their locations farming, whether it’s animals or agric—or grain crops, they’re busy with that. So just having somebody to get that voice out there that their animals are treated nicely, they’re processed appropriately, and you know, we have to, these are our day-to-day activities you have to do to take care of these animals and to increase our grain supply and then how it’s processed further down the road, you know, to go into the food supply. You know, just getting that word out that, the benefits, that animals are not treated poorly.

I: Mm-hm. No. 19: in your opinion, what would be a good way for farmers to interact with or talk with consumers about agriculture?

P: I guess maybe just interviews with the media. That might be a way to get the most bang for your buck, in a sense. Um, to have them, cause you can reach a large audience, with the diminished, a large audience, without having to take a ton of time away from the farmers’ busy, busy lives. Interviews and maybe some TV shows or something that’s a little bit more positive in that respect. That might be one way that that could happen.

I: Um, No. 20: do you have any recommendations on how farmers could reach out to people who are not directly connected to agriculture?

P: Other than doing media outsources and things like that, and I know, like, when I was in 4-H and FFA, we would go to local little festivals and we would take animals and we would do petting zoos and things like that. But that takes a lot of time in order to do that, and it seems that people are constantly in a rush, everything they do, going from Point A to Point B, everybody’s hurried up, and they don’t really just take time to see what’s around them. So if there was a way, you know, if there was a way that farmers could … You know, there’s definitely … I know there’s the Farm Science Review that’s in, that’s in Ohio, but you know, that’s really only--people interested in farming and agriculture go to that. It doesn’t get the information out beyond that so I still think, you know, a media outlet is definitely a good way to go.

I: Um, No. 21: what do you believe is the greatest obstacle for farmers interacting with consumers who are no longer directly connected to agriculture?

P: Uh, hm. It’s that people, they, there’s … I don’t even know the best way … I mean, around where I live currently, there’s just not the exposure. You’re just not, you don’t see
the farms, you don’t see, so, in turn, you don’t see the farmers so it’s, it’s kind of a disconnect from your suburban life and your urban life because they’re not exposed to it. And if you, so many people, if you don’t see it, you’re not interested in it. And I think that’s a big part, is there’s such a disconnect between the two lives, um, ways of life. And it just, the information doesn’t get out there because of that, because there’s such that disconnect between the two.

I: Um, and No. 22: is there anything I didn’t ask about that you wanted to add?

P: I can’t think of anything. I can’t think of anything to add.

I: Ok. And then I did have some follow-up questions.

P: Ok.

I: So what county are you guys in in Georgia?

P: What town?

I: What county?

P: County? We live in Coweta County. It’s C-O-W-E-T-A, and it’s a suburb of, we’re 30 minutes from the Atlanta airport.

I: Oh, ok, I wondered if you guys were near Atlanta. So, that is just so interesting, and your husband works for Cargill, and …

P: Yeah, Cargill Meats.

I: Ok, that’s just so cool that you guys … Have you guys moved a lot?

P: We have not. We’ve only moved twice. He, when he first started training and everything, he’s been with them for 15 years, he started off in Illinois, and he traveled a lot when he was training, but when he was placed in Philadelphia, and we were there for four and a half years, and then we’ve been here for almost 10 years.

I: Oh wow.

P: Yeah, I never thought I would say that.

I: I was going to ask: do you guys think you’ll ever move back up this way, or do you think you guys will stay in Georgia?
P: Um, our hope has always been to move back to northwest Ohio because that’s where our families are, and both of our families farm. So that was our hope, but, you know, the more time goes on, it’s just, it’s hard to say if that’s going to happen with careers, and he, there’s not a lot of opportunities, so we, we’ve kind of put our family first at this point and see. But after being so cold, we were home in February through that bitter, bitter cold, and my husband was like, ‘You want to move back to that stuff???’ [laughs].

I: Aw [laughs]. You get used to it.

P: That’s what I said. Yeah, me, too. Everybody’s like, ‘How do you deal with it?’ Well, you just bundle up and deal with it. There’s no other option [laughs].

I: Does your family still farm, then?

P: Um, my parents no longer farm. They cash rent their property out, all of our farm ground. And then my husband’s dad still has, I think he has like 80 acres that he still will farm, that he does, and he does it by himself.

I: Wow, ok. So did you guys meet at Ohio State, or did you know each other from northwest Ohio?

P: Yeah, we grew … We went to high school together. But we didn’t date or anything until after high school, after he graduated high school.

I: Oh, ok, very cool. And then, how many kids do you have?

P: We have two little boys.

I: Aw. So fun. Well …

P: Yeah, they’re fun, which is another reason I would like to move back, or either, if we’re not going to move back to Ohio and live there, in that rural community, we’re kind of starting to explore the idea of buying a piece of property out of the subdivision. Just so our boys can have a little bit of the experiences that we had when we were growing up, and bring my horse down here, and get some other animals that we can have. Just to expose them to that lifestyle, because I really believe that it adds so much to a person’s life, the responsibility, and the experiences, and they’re very valuable, and so much of that is just pushed to the side.

I: Mm-hm. And yeah, it’s like, when you have moved away from a rural community, yeah, like how do you kind of pass them along, some of that stuff along to your kids, you know, if that was important to you.
P: Yeah, yeah, it’s hard, and you know and it’s like … You know when I was a kid, my friends at school would say, that lived in town would say, ‘What do you do all day? It has to be so boring,’ you know, and my thought was, ‘Well, what do you do all day?’ you know? And I kind of get to the point that I feel that way at times now. Like I understand why these parents, you know, there’s these moms and they go play tennis all day long and do all this. I get why they do that—because there is nothing else (laughs). Um, that stereotype that they have is definitely there for a reason, now being on both sides and experiencing both sides of it, it’s kind of like, this is what they do to fill up their time, because they don’t have the other side of it, to do. Where I’m like, work we have our garden, we try to have a garden, limited to where we live, just because our yard and things. I mean, we grow our vegetables in five gallon buckets, because, to get to the most amount of sun that we can get to, and everything’s in planter boxes, which is just totally different than what we grow up, grew up doing. We go home, and we’re like, ok, we plant this great big garden for my in-laws, and we go to my parents’ house and expose the kids to the horses and the chickens and, you know, just farm life, and they love it. They think it’s the greatest thing under the sun. So, hopefully, we will be able to able to either move back there and give them that experience, or we’re just going to have to find a property here and be able to give them that experience here.

I: Mm-hm. How often do you guys come …

P: But that has its …

I: Oh, go ahead.

P: We probably travel home three or four times a year.

I: Oh, ok. And I’m sorry, what were you going to say when I interrupted you?

P: Um, I don’t even remember what I was going to say. I don’t know.

I: Oh, ok. I apologize. You were talking about like, moving back or staying in Georgia.

P: Yeah, I don’t remember.

I: Yeah, that’s totally fine.

P: That’s what happens when, after you have kids and you have a few things going on, everything escapes.

I: [laughs]. Aw. Well, NAME, was there anything I didn’t ask about that you wanted to add?
P: I can’t think of anything, I mean in the … Since I graduated college, and with my first, my love of horses, and starting working at … I worked at a therapeutic horseback riding farm for about four and a half years. That is probably, I mean, it’s still connected with agriculture, with it having the horses and all of that on the side. That is a very, I think that is a very important aspect to get out there, because that is a very under---misunderstood. It’s an opportunity that people can learn about, to help kids and adults and any, how important horses and that bond can really be with a person and seeing that. And I worked at a location there called, their name was Thorncroft Equestrian Center. And they have been, when I had worked there, they have probably been in business for over 30—or did they just have? I think they’ve been for seventy--... I don’t even want to state a number because I don’t remember what it is at this point.

I: Sure.

P: But they help any, they do able-bodied riding lessons and therapeutic riding lessons, anywhere from little kids all the way up to adults. I mean, we’re talking as young as 18 months and 2-years-old.

I: Wow.

P: And there’s lots of [mumble] indications, but to see these kids come in that have anywhere from mental disabilities, physical disabilities, emotional … To see the relationship they build with these animals and the smiles and the freedom, in a sense, you could say, these kids feel, is phenomenal. There’s a lot to be said for that. So that would be the only thing I would want to add, is how therapeutic horseback riding really is a positive portrayal, and it’s just another way to get agriculture out.

P: I just feel like where we live now, the biggest thing is everybody’s concerned about is the food supply and what’s in our food and how … It’s definitely has the connotation that it’s bad for you and that--being immersed in that gets a little overwhelming at times.

I: Mm-hm. Just a lot of negative conversation about agriculture.

P: It is, yes. So a lot of times, they’ll talk about it and I’ll add my positive two cents’ worth and try to educate a little at a time, but I try not to delve, to jump into it really big cause I just don’t want to, I don’t want to burn bridges, and just add little bits at a time, to keep it positive. So, but that’s the biggest thing—the negativity that’s out there is really, really strong. And to me, it kind of breaks my heart. I think it’s really sad. And I think it’s a touchy subject because it is people’s food supply. So …

I: Thank you so much for your time ...