



FACT SHEET · FAQ'S OF THE MEDIA

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS OF THE MEDIA

The answers below are provided for reference as you might craft your own reply to the journalist or reporter as it pertains to your operations and operational philosophy.

What is risk management?

Farming has always been dependent on many variables, many out of the control of farmers. Severe weather conditions, like droughts or early frosts, diseases or pest infestations, and in the case of farmers who raise crops or livestock as commodities, market fluctuations, all have a bearing on the risks farmers must endure to survive as farmers. Risk management, then, is the approach some farmers or ranchers have taken to mitigate, if not reduce, the amount of risk they might encounter. For those farms featured as a part of the Renewing the Countryside success stories, diversification has played a central role in managing risk.

What's the difference between organic, USDA certified organic, sustainable agriculture or natural?

There are numerous approaches and practices which can contribute to healthy land, water, air and products raised on the farm. From Biodynamic farming to USDA certified organic practices, from grass-fed or pastured livestock to naturally raised hogs, goats or beef cattle, farmers today can choose the method and approach which best serves their overall goals of land stewardship and the raising of healthy, safe and nutritious foods. In the end, individual customers need to make the determination as to what variables are most important to them, in selecting those farms with practices they most support. In general, the subtleties and nuances of farming approaches within all these practices still maintain a general commitment to the avoidance of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Therefore, for many customers, it's not the label that matters. It's the farmer and their approach to agriculture.

Why are organic, or sustainably grown or raised, products better for you and the environment?

Regardless of the exact practices adopted by the farmers, more sustainable approaches to agriculture tend to share in common the emphasis on improving the health of the soil, conserving water, energy and other resources, maintaining a humane environment where livestock is provided access to fresh air, ample space to move about and, in many cases, pasture in which to graze.

I keep hearing that farming is in decline and family farms are failing.

Has this been represented inaccurately?

Family farms, especially midsize family farms, are statistically in decline and have been so since the 1980s. A few very large farms, many corporate owned, and those variously imagined, small -- or even micro -- family farms now tend to dominate the countryside. It's the small family farms, operating on as few as 5 acres and as many as a thousand, that exhibit the greatest hope for the long term sustained use of agricultural lands and viable livelihoods for the farmers. Per acre, many of the smallest farms tend to produce the highest profits per acre as well as demonstrating the most effective land stewardship practices.

