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## John Bennett interview

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*Tell me who you are.*

(00:00:16)

**John Bennett:** Well, I'm John Bennett. I represent the -- I am the Executive Director of an organization called the Utah Quality Growth Commission. And one of the things that the Commission does is to administer the Lee Ray McAllister Critical Land Conservation Program or Conservation Fund, which has over the last 15 years, conserved or restored about 80,000 acres of ground in Utah. And we spent about \$20 million in state funds that's been matched by over \$150 million in other funds. (00:00:47) So, something around \$200 million in conservation investment in Utah over the last 12 years. And so, in 2011, the Quality Growth Commission co-sponsored a Lieutenant Governor's Task Force on Agriculture Sustainability. One of the things that the commission has talked about is that protecting our agricultural heritage and our agricultural land is a key piece of quality growth and conservation. (00:01:16) And so, we were interested in, "How do we sustain what we have?" thinking about that from a growth perspective and how do we direct growth in a way that's going to allow us to maintain the agricultural uses that we have and perhaps expand them where it makes sense.

*What are the mechanisms that you use?*

(00:02:06)

**John Bennett:** Well, there are several. With the McAllister Fund, we focus mostly on the use of agricultural conservation easements. Conservation easement is a conservation tool that allows you to purchase the development right on a property. So you can compensate a farmer for staying on the land instead of selling it for his retirement or for whatever reason he may need to sell it. And then, in return, the land is perpetually protected against development. (00:02:37) And most of those easements that we've done for agricultural purposes are held by the State Department of Agriculture. So it's people who the farmers know and trust own and control the development rights on those properties. There are many other ways to protect agricultural, but that's the one we primarily have used.

*Talk to me about the 80,000 acres.*

(00:03:03)

**John Bennett:** Okay. So we have done properties in 19 of the 29 counties in Utah. We have done all kinds of properties. Trails in the urban areas. Farms, ranches. And the purposes of the easements have varied. We also do easements that are intended to protect wildlife habitat, watersheds. (00:03:29) We just closed an easement, for

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example, down in Kane County on the east side of Zion National Park, which is a ranch that has been one of the main gateways to the Zion Narrows. And it had been slated to have a subdivision built in the middle of this ranch, which would have made access to the Narrows more difficult. And easement was placed on that ranch. It'll stay as an agricultural property and access to that gateway to the Narrows is going to be preserved. (00:03:59) So, that's the sort of thing we've done. And then, many of these properties are agricultural in nature because the private land in Utah that is available is mostly agricultural land other than what you find in the cities. And so, the man who own that property, for example, is a rancher. He'll continue to run his cows and do his thing. And there's an old homestead there that he instead to perhaps refurbish. An antique orchard that has antique apple varieties that he wants to bring back. (00:04:33) And a few things like that. So, he wants to take advantage of some of the tourist dollars that may come through his property as a result of people accessing the Narrows, which is just fine as long as the access is maintained and the nature of the land doesn't change beyond agriculture.

*Why is farmland conservation important?*

(00:05:22)

**John Bennett:** Most people enjoy being able to go to the farmer's market, get fresh produce that's locally grown. So that's one reason. It's also sort of a preparedness issue. We have a preparedness ethic. We're all supposed to have food storage and all the sort of stuff here in Utah. But also, the notion that could we support ourselves? Right now, most food you grow in the grocery store has to travel a thousand miles or more to get into your grocery store. (00:05:54) What happens if the transportation system goes down for any period of time? We had an anecdote from an intern who worked in our office who lived up in White Fish, Montana. Talked about how a big blizzard caused the roads to be closed for four days. And all of the milk in the local grocery stores was purchased. (00:06:20) And then, this caused instability in the price of milk and the availability of milk for three months. Because what happened was, whenever a milk delivery came, everyone went and snapped it up. And it just kept happening like that until it finally settled down, but it took three months for the price and the availability of milk in that situation to stabilize. That becomes a difficult problem if you have a natural disaster and bridges go down. (00:06:48) So one of the things that's really important is the notion that we have some capability of providing for ourselves in the state of Utah. We could just abandon all of our agricultural and say, "Let's just import everything," but that's not a really very good idea considering this potential that we've certainly seen our share of natural disasters in the US in recent years. (00:07:14) And so, that's another one. And then, I think generally the ability -- the feel of an agricultural area adds something culturally and socially to a community. Being able to take your children out and see a farm is a good thing. I worked for a while for an organization that did a state fair exhibit every year. And I was surprised by the number of children in Salt Lake City that had never seen a cow outside of the state fair. (00:07:46) And so, that's an interesting problem. (*cell phone rings*)

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(00:08:24)

**John Bennett:** So back in the mid-1990s I worked for an organization that did state fair exhibit. And I was surprised that in 1995, '96, when children from Salt Lake City school districts would come, this was the first time that they had ever seen a cow was what they saw at the state fair. And so, the notion that we have agricultural lands that people can actually see where milk comes from, where apples come from, vegetables come from. They can understand that. (00:08:59) And then, there're opportunities perhaps for schools to visit farms, those kinds of things. Those all have value and make this a better place to live. So there's a quality of life issue I believe from having agricultural lands in our communities.

*Talk to me about the three benefits mentioned in the toolkit.*

(00:09:29)

**John Bennett:** Well in some parts of our state, the agriculture industry is the biggest industry. And it's not that far from the Wasatch Front. The single largest agricultural county producing in the state is Utah County, not that far from Salt Lake City.

*Let's talk about the three benefits.*

(00:10:29)

**John Bennett:** Utah Department of Agriculture did a study looking at the economic impact of agriculture and agricultural-related businesses. And that study indicated that 16 percent of Utah's economy is agricultural related. Now, that includes not only the production but also the sale of agricultural products. So some of the work in the grocery industry and things like that. But that's still a significant percentage of our ...

*(airplane) What kind of economic benefits specifically for the Wasatch Front?*

(00:11:16)

**John Bennett:** Well, there are a number of economic benefits and they run the gamut. I mean, one thing for example is that protected lands, farms and otherwise, have a positive economic impact on the surrounding development. As an example, it's an estimate that 70 percent of the people who buy homes along golf courses don't play golf. But the reason that they do that is because of the view. (00:11:44) The uninterrupted view of open space and that's true of farms as well. Farms have the potential, perhaps, to be -- to provide some nuisances that people wouldn't get on a golf

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course, but it tends to be that people who -- that's why people want to move out and have their 10-acre farm is because they want that experience and they're willing to pay for it. (00:12:10) It's a problem for the value of agricultural land, but it is a significant economic benefit to have an agriculture -- base of land that is an agricultural production because it supports the value of the other lands that are there. We've talked a little bit about those areas in the state that rely on agriculture. Most of the state, in fact, agricultural is the single largest industry. (00:12:42) Most of the state in terms of land area, not most of the state in terms of people who work there. But I think that agricultural offers the potential to expand the number of jobs in that arena fairly significantly. And particularly when you take our agricultural production and you do something to it, you can get some pretty good jobs. By that, I mean, for example, that people who work in cheese factories or who work in processing facilities make pretty good wages. (00:13:16) And so, if we can think about all of those jobs, meat processing plants and those kinds of things, all of those are related to agriculture. So there's a significant potential to protect the jobs that we already have and potentially to expand them and we think about our agricultural -- protecting our agricultural resources. And I actually think that that's one of the ways that we could protect our agricultural lands is if we start thinking about agricultural as a business. (00:13:46) And say, "What would we do to support a business in our communities?" Well we, as taxpayers, invest a lot of money trying to make our facilities and our communities friendly for business. We don't necessarily do the same thing in making them friendly for agriculture because we haven't been thinking about agriculture as a business. We've been thinking about it, in particular in cities, they think about agricultural land as holding zones. (00:14:15) "Oh, this is all going to be houses some day and we'll let you farm it until you're ready to sell." And in the meantime -- so we don't think about promoting your business, protecting your business, and expanding your business, and providing new jobs. We don't think about encouraging farmers and ranchers to get into the processing business so that they can improve their bottom line. So if I a guy's growing raspberries, we don't encourage him to have a small factory where he makes jam. (00:14:46) We say, "Sell the raspberries." But if he makes jam and sells the jam, the jam is going to go -- he's going to make a lot more money on the jam than he's making on the raspberries. And so, that's the sort of question of if our zoning and our business regulations and all of that were changed to encourage the business side of agriculture to succeed, we would see the agricultural lands conserved. (00:15:14) And we would see, I think more jobs in agriculture. And that would be a good thing. Any time we have more jobs and more opportunity, that's a good thing. So the toolkit that the Quality Growth Commission has recently worked on, which I think is available online now at [planning.utah.gov](http://planning.utah.gov) is an opportunity for communities to look at how they're regulating agriculture in their community and say, "Are there things that we could do differently that might make the agricultural operations in our communities more profitable, allow them to expand their business, hire more people, and be more successful in those arenas?" (00:15:55) So it's a fairly significant percentage. 16 percent of the ...

(00:16:02)

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**John Bennett:** 16 percent of Utah's ...

(00:16:07)

**John Bennett:** It's a fairly significant part of Utah's economy. 16 percent of our economy, that's billions of dollars every year that come from agriculture and agricultural-related uses. And I'd like to see us expand that, if it were up to me. I think that communities could do a lot more to promote agricultural business in their communities.

*What about environmental benefits?*

(00:16:37)

**John Bennett:** What I've found in managing the McAllister fund is that most farmers are environmentalists at heart. Their desire is to continue to be on the land and continue to use the land and utilize it year after year. So they're not out to destroy the land, to make it so that it can't grow crops, or graze cattle. What they want to do is improve it. And what we try to do with the McAllister fund is to award, or reward rather, people who are being good stewards. (00:17:15) And most of those are agricultural people. And if you think about the watershed for Salt Lake County, for example, or Utah County to Weber County, we always think about the Wasatch Mountains, but the water for Salt Lake County, only a third of that comes out of the Wasatch Mountains. The rest of it is coming from Summit County from the Provo River, from the Weber River. (00:17:42) Well if you look at Summit County, you look at Morgan County, some of these places, they have large percentages of their land that's private. And so, a significant amount of the watershed for Salt Lake County is on private land. And so what you want are the farmers to continue to do a good job on those ranchers of protecting the land, enhancing the land, and protecting those watersheds. (00:18:13) Which benefits them. They want the forage to grow. They want to have forage for their animals. And they want to have -- they don't want the streams to dry up. They don't want water quality issues. All of those are problems that are associated with that. So farmers tend to be good stewards and that's good for the environment. (00:18:32) The other thing that happens, and this is counterintuitive to a lot of people, but what we see is that the wildlife tend to follow the cattle. The reason is because when the cows eat a thing and they leave behind their droppings, et cetera, and they come in and eat a field, that stimulates growth. And so, two or three weeks later, that's where the deer and elk are going to be. And so, having the cattle on the land is very good for the wildlife typically. (00:19:04) Not always. Nobody's ever perfect and we can't say that all farmers are perfect.

[Talk Over]

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(00:19:13)

**John Bennett:** Yeah, that's exactly right. It depends upon what wildlife species you are, I suppose. But certainly the big game species. We have some really excellent examples of enlightened management in Utah. One is the LDS Church Farm up at Desert Land and Livestock in Rich County. Which has the highest stocking rate of any ranch in the country -- in Utah. (00:19:38) But also, has a very healthy deer and elk herds and bird species that appear there, nowhere else in Utah. A variety of things like that all because of the way they manage those herds. So the herds are big, but they don't stay anywhere very long. They move them around a lot. Just like you would if you had wolves and the wolves would move the deer and elk around significantly much more quickly. (00:20:05) So following that sort of natural thing tends to have a positive impact on the ground.

*Anything you want to add to social benefits?*

(00:20:18)

**John Bennett:** I just think all of us in Utah or most of us in Utah, if you grew up here, you don't have to go back very far to get to grandpa's ranch. And a lot of us can think about people that we knew or members of our family who grew up on a farm. Members of our family background. And so, it's a social benefit. It's a benefit to say, "We are agrarian." (00:20:49) I'm not an agrarian, but I have an agrarian background. There were farmers in my background and there were farmers in most people's background. And so, there's a social benefit in just having that relationship to the land that comes from the kind of insular nature of Utahans where we all grew up here. And grandpa grew up here. (00:21:17) And we all want to come back. We go away, but we want to come back. That's -- there's a social benefit. And much of that is tied to the land, and how it was used, and why it was used, and those sorts of things. Those are social benefits in my mind.

*Do you work on agricultural protection zones?*

(00:21:39)

**John Bennett:** I can tell you a little bit about agricultural protection zones. An agricultural protection zone or area, it's actually called ... (*truck*)

(00:21:53)

**John Bennett:** So there is in state statute something called an agricultural protection area. And the intention of an agricultural protection area is to give the farmer some protection against nuisance claims when people develop next to a farm. And also, some protection from zoning changes during the period when you're in the agricultural protection area. (00:22:16) Those are created by, according to the statute, by the

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farmer himself or there's a group of farmers potentially. And they come to the county and they say, or the city, and say, "We want to create an agricultural protection area." And the state statute has a number of requirements that they go through, but when they're established, then the farmers can remain in agriculture. (00:22:38) They can take them out of agriculture. They can put them back into agriculture. But they have to stay in agriculture to be in the agricultural protection area. So that's one option that the state offers for protecting agricultural land. And of course, the other one is what's called the Green Belt -- referred to as Green Belt taxation, which is a situation where land that is in agricultural use is taxed as if it were agricultural land and not for its potential development value. (00:23:09) Which means that for a farmer, that's a significant benefit because if you're taxing for its potential development value, the value of the land quickly escalates to the point where a farmer may not be able to continue to stay on the land because he can't afford the taxes. So those are a couple things that are in state statute that protect it. Most agricultural protection areas are -- as I say, they're all established by farmers. (00:23:38) Most of them exist in areas of high growth where farmers have existed for a long time and they desire to remain in agriculture. And so, they will put their land in agricultural protection areas. There are problems sometimes, conflicts between cities and counties and the farmers because they can prevent even eminent domain actions with an agricultural protection area. (00:24:05) So you can't necessarily come in and condemn that farm land with an agricultural protection area. And that can make it difficult to do roads or other infrastructure projects if you have an agricultural protection area, but it is also very good for the farmers because it protects them. The nuisance protection is the one that's most interesting. It's interesting that people want to come live out in the country. (00:24:30) But then, when a farmer is cutting hay in the middle of the night and the headlight from his tractor's shining in your bedroom window, you get kind of excited because you want him to get off and do that in the daytime. But he's got to cut hay when the hay's ready. That's just sort of the nature of haying. (00:24:49) So, I mean as an example or he may spray chemicals that you don't want him to spray or a variety of things like that. And so, the protection from nuisance claims, the ability to say, "We are farmers. This is a farming area," is a positive thing for many farmers and that's why they choose to do that.

*Can you talk about markets and retail options?*

(00:25:19)

**John Bennett:** We've seen -- there's a variety of different ways that communities, cities and counties, treat the retail sale of agricultural products. The way that most farmers who're growing vegetables make a living now is that they -- many of them will try to -- if they're large enough, they'll try to sell into the grocery stores. (00:25:40) But a lot will also look for other outlets. They'll look for farmer's markets and they'll look for fruit stands along sides of the road. And some places allow that, but some places don't.

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And some places don't allow the farmers to have enough flexibility to round out what they're offering at their fruit stand. (00:26:02) For example, you might allow a fruit stand, but you don't -- I don't allow -- if I don't allow my neighbor -- if I can't go to my neighbor and say, "You grow watermelons. I grow corn. Let me give you some corn and you give me some watermelons. And we'll -- so that people don't have to stop twice," that could be a problem. People may say, "Well, I only want corn today or I only want watermelons." Instead of stopping and getting some of both. (00:26:28) And so, the notion of can we regulate to allow farmers to get together and have a community fruit stand or to -- my neighbor and I like each other. I'll sell his watermelons. He'll sell my corn. That's one way. But there are places, for example in Utah, where you can't erect a tent on the side of the road even if you pay somebody and sell produce out of it. (00:26:53) In one place that we heard of, the only way you can do that is if the tent actually touches a physical, retail outlet. So you've got to make a deal with your local hardware store, or your local grocery store, or whatever, and put your tent right up against the wall. And then, you can have -- that's treated like a sidewalk sale. (00:27:14) But you couldn't move the tent out to the front of the parking lot to attract more business. And so, what we try to do with this toolkit was to say, "Okay, think about whether that's really the best way to regulate those agricultural businesses if you want to protect them and have them grow and thrive in your community, giving them more options for the sale of their product. (00:27:40) More ways that they can get it to the consumers when it's fresh because that's what a local producer has over the guy who's selling it in the grocery store is, "I picked it this morning." Whereas, the cucumber I picked this morning is what you're going to buy under my little canopy on the side of the road. The cucumber you buy in the grocery store was picked a week ago or two weeks ago. (00:28:02) And it's been stored in cold storage, and now, it's coming out. I can argue that my cucumber that I picked this morning is going to taste better than the one you buy in the store. That's the advantage that you offer. You may not be cheaper, but you're going to offer a superior product. So farmer's markets, they've expanded dramatically in Utah. The first farmer's markets I think started in 1990. (00:28:28) And we had three. I think last year, there were almost 300 in Utah. So in 20 years, 100 percent expansion and there're newer ones coming out every year. There were two new ones that started in Salt Lake County last year. One at Wheeler Farm and one at Gardner Village. It's actually the same market, but they do the Saturday at Gardener Village and the Sunday at Wheeler Farm. Just in Salt Lake County. (00:28:57) And so, of course, that's an option that a lot of people use to make a little extra money. We heard a presentation from some folks on the west side of Salt Lake who run what's called the People's Market, which is a farmer's market out there indicating that there were a number of people who live on the west side of Salt Lake who significantly supplement their incomes by what they grow in their backyards and then sell at the farmer's market. (00:29:27) And so one of the opportunities that a farmer's market or this kind of regulation, the allowing of people to sell produce in a variety of ways is that you provide a new economic opportunity for kids, for people who maybe are house rich and cash poor. If I've got enough money to buy a few packages of seeds, potentially I've got an opportunity to raise something and sell something that I can put back into my home, and into my family, and make my situation better. (00:29:58) I can even hire

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people potentially. There are people who are in Salt Lake County who -- there's one woman that makes a living growing vegetables in unused backyard plots. She goes around, knocks on doors. People let her grow vegetables in the backyard.

(00:30:26)

**John Bennett:** So there are in Salt Lake County that I'm aware of at least one person who makes her living by growing vegetables in people's backyards, and she'll go to people and say, "If you're not using your garden plot, can I grow in it?" And she'll give them some of the produce and sell the rest at the farmer's market. She's able to support herself and that's basically her only job. So when we talk about what is agriculture, we often think of the big farm, the one that's a thousand acres or more. (00:30:54) We think of the small farm maybe a couple-hundred acres. What we're seeing a lot more of now is to meet that demand for vegetables and fruits in farmers' markets are the microfarms. The people who are intensively growing vegetables and fruits on half an acre, quarter of an acre, even an acre or two. (00:31:13) And there've been some efforts on the part of the state legislature to promote that. A couple of years ago, Senator Neiderhauser from Salt Lake County got a bill that applies in Salt Lake County that allows the same benefits of the agricultural tax exemption to apply on smaller parcels. The regular Green Belt tax applies for five acres or more. (00:31:39) This applies to parcels that are two acres and between two and five acres. And so, that's a much more likely kind of a scenario for somebody in Salt Lake County than the larger farm. But somebody in Salt Lake County may have two acres that they could farm. The next step in that is going to be, are we going to give people, if they've got two acres, but that's two separate one-acre parcels, are we going to give them that same kind of protection? (00:32:11) And that's a question yet to be determined, but that would be one direction that policymakers might want to consider would be to have -- people are making a living on -- at farming even if they're farming an acre here, and an acre over there, and an acre over there. Maybe we ought to give them the same tax benefits that we give to other farmers. (00:32:30) So that's a different definition of agriculture, but it's an agricultural definition where you're actually seeing people making a living on small plots now because they're intensively selling -- intensively growing then selling it at farmers' markets. Or using another tool that's called a CSA, which is community-supported agriculture, where you sell shares in the produce. (00:32:56) And that helps the farmer because they sell the shares before the produce. So if you buy a CSA share, you're taking part of the risk. If something happens and the crop doesn't come in, you paid for it but you didn't get anything out of it. But in most cases, you're going to get at least something because they'll do something else. So it's -- there're lots of new models out there for what agriculture is. And even in urban areas we're seeing more and more of that, which means I think that cities and counties need to start thinking about how they're going to regulate those kinds of agricultural properties. (00:33:31) We're seeing very different regulations. Say, for example in Salt Lake City, that maybe what you see

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in Murray, or what you see in South Salt Lake, or Sandy. So each city kind of has to think about what it's going to do with those kinds of situations. But the potential is there for a lot of agriculture and a lot of economic benefit. The Tagge family, for example, which has fruit stands in Salt Lake County. (00:33:59) They hire a lot of teenagers to pick fruit and to sell fruit at those stands. It's an opportunity for a lot of kids to make -- have a summer job and make something that they wouldn't have otherwise. And that's -- and it's directly related to agriculture and the work that the Tagge family does. So there's been a lot of interesting things going on now at that sort of lower level of agriculture where people are actually making a living on much smaller acreages.

[Break in Tape]

(00:34:39)

**John Bennett:** It depends upon the varieties. The guys who're in the orchard business, the Rawleighs down in Utah County will grow, for example, a whole bunch of different varieties of fruit with the idea that you would have a long season where you could sell fruit because you'd have some that comes on early, and some that comes on late, and some that comes on in the middle. So different varieties in -- you have to think about all those things when you're a farmer.

(00:35:05)

**John Bennett:** We just -- most of us, we just plant a few tomato plants and harvest whenever it comes. We eat. We take it.

*Why do you think consumers are more interested in local produce?*

(00:35:36)

**John Bennett:** Yeah. Well, I think there're a couple of issues. I think one is the concern about what you have to do in order to grow large quantities of fruits or vegetables. So the kinds of chemicals that get put on it. Many of us are not that concerned about that, but there are others who are very concerned about that. But also flavor. The kind of product that you're getting. Is it going to be ripe at the right time? (00:36:13) Those kinds of issues. I think there's some desire on the part of people to have that connection to an agrarian lifestyle. And so, going to the farmer's market, being able to talk to somebody who actually gets his hands dirty every day for a living. I think a lot of people enjoy that. A lot of the farmers' markets have become community gathering places. (00:36:35) And they don't just sell farmers' produce, but they also sell crafts and other things. So it becomes sort of like the old markets that you used to have in the villages in Medieval Times. Everyone selling their wares for whatever. And sometimes, the farmers like that and sometimes they don't. It just depends upon the farmer and who the sponsor of the market is and some of that. But there's a number of things like that. (00:37:01) So I think there's a lot of reasons, but for many people I think

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it's flavor and it's knowing who the grower is. Being able to say -- talk to them. "How do you grow this? What's your farm like?" Even visiting it. Sometimes people who buy CSA shares will actually want to go visit the farm and see what's going on and understand what they're paying for. So you're getting savvier consumers. Consumers who want the very best flavor. They watch food television shows. (00:37:38) And they see the chefs going to the market in the morning and they think they can do the same thing. And they -- obviously they can. And so, that's a benefit to the farmer because the farmer can avoid selling into the commodities market where he gets ten cents on the dollar and maybe the farmer can go and take 90 cents on the dollar. That's the other side of it is that that's why farmers' markets and that sort of thing -- it's why people like that. (00:38:07) Because there's no middle man, you're buying directly from the grower. You're not buying from the grocery company which bought from a middle man which bought from the grower. There's been a markup and there's been a separation from what was on the land, how was it being worked, who was working it to you buy it. So all of those things I think are things that are attractive to regular farmers' market shoppers. (00:38:39) They want to go in and talk to the person who grew it or somebody who works for the person who grew it. And say, "What's it like on your farm?" and all those sorts of things.

*Did we talk about water on camera?*

(00:39:04)

**John Bennett:** No, or the -- and that study that you wanted us to talk about. We didn't talk about that on camera either. That's part of the self sufficiency question.

*Let's talk about self sufficiency.*

(00:39:19)

**John Bennett:** Okay. Well there're many ways to look at self sufficiency. Obviously, individuals can learn skills that their grandparents knew that we forgot. So we can all learn to grow gardens in our backyards. That will help us to be more self sufficient. And that's one kind of agriculture, if you will. If I'm growing a big vegetable garden, I'm a farmer. (00:39:42) At least of that patch. But another kind of self sufficiency and one that we looked at a lot when we were doing this sustainability taskforce was the ability of the state of Utah to support its own citizens with the agricultural production that we do here. And so, we looked -- we had an intern from Utah State University do a study for us. And he took the US Department of Agriculture's latest effort to define what the nutritional needs are of Americans, which is called My Plate. (00:40:15) And they identify what should be on your plate. And they talk about the number of servings of fruits, and vegetables, and wheat, and dairy, and meat, and all those sorts of things. So

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we took the My Plate stands for children, women, men. Created a sort of an average of what each Utahan would have to consume in order to remain healthy on daily basis. (00:40:40) And then, how many total servings of each of those for a year. Then we took the census for 2010 and said, "How many Utahans are there?" And multiplied that. What does it require for one person by ten or by that 2010 population. And the result is that -- and then, we looked at, "Okay. Now what do we produce?" (00:41:05) And what we discovered was that in terms of producing protein, we produce enough meat in turkeys, and cows, and pigs, and other things to provide for the protein needs of Utah, but we're lacking in processing facilities. And so, that would be one thing that we might want to think about from a policy perspective is providing processing facilities, for example, for our proteins. (00:41:34) We're next exporters in dairy. So we produce more than we need and we actually export it. We produce enough wheat or nearly enough wheat to provide for the needs for bread, and cereals, and all of that. We looked at all the other grains and said, "That's probably -- we probably need most of that for animal feed." And so, we decided not to look at whether we could -- had enough for everybody who may want rye bread or whatever. (00:42:04) But figuring all of that would go to feed the animals. The place where we were deficient in Utah is fruits and vegetables. We don't -- fruits, we produce roughly about ten percent of the need in a year. Vegetables was so small that we couldn't calculate it. So it's less than two percent of the recommended requirements for vegetables in Utah for the citizens of Utah that we actually produce and can measure in what we're doing. (00:42:38) So there's a lot of need to expand that if we can.

(00:42:59)

**John Bennett:** The other thing you wanted to talk about was water. So from a growth perspective, the limiting factor is water. That's what's going to prevent people from living here. That's what's going to prevent us from building houses. Most people don't know that 80 percent or slightly more of all the water in Utah is used for agriculture. And municipal and industrial uses only use about 15 to 20 percent of the water. But of that water that we treat for those purposes, more than half of that is actually going to landscaping, which in some ways is like farming. (00:43:39) The crop is bluegrass, and flowers, and other things. And so, there's lots of opportunities for us to conserve and expand with our existing supplies, but we really are going to have to start focusing on water in the future. And part of that is if we're going to expand our agricultural uses, we need to protect our canals and water delivery systems to make sure that a farmer can get water to do what he wants to do. (00:44:08) When you see a canal break like we had in Murray a few weeks ago, the first call that happens is for, "Let's close the canal," because it's a threat. Well, of course, there're people at the other end of that who're relying on that water. And so, figuring out how to protect the people who have homes next to canals and at the same time ensure that we can still deliver the water to the people who need it, that's going to be a big issue. (00:44:38) Helping the farmers to become more efficient with the water that they use so that more maybe is available for other purposes is another issue. And then, the question of maybe we change what our landscaping is. Maybe we don't all have big bluegrass lawns. Maybe we grow a lot of

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native plants that can survive on what rainfall they get in the summer and we don't have to water our outdoor water except maybe our gardens and that sort of thing. (00:45:08) Because if we're paying millions and millions of dollars to treat culinary water, and then, we're putting it on our vegetable gardens, that seems like kind of a waste. The purpose of culinary water really is for us to drink, and use, and wash with. So that water issue affects agriculture, but it affects everything else. It's going to be our limiting factor in growth. And figuring out how to make that orderly transition from agricultural water to municipal water. (00:45:40) And then, how to make that orderly transition from agricultural water back to -- or how to figure out where to put it and which pieces of land to save and which pieces of land to develop on. That's the other issue is we know we're growing, and we know we're going to need more houses and those things. So we can't save every piece of property that we might want to. (00:46:03) So we've got to figure out where to grow and water's going to be a limiting factor in that. Does the water exist where the best place to grow is? So the water is going to be the limiting factor. There's no other thing that prevents us from -- we can overcome all the other challenges, but water is a finite resource and it's one of the ones that we're going to have to figure out as we go forward. (00:46:28) Both for the good of agriculture and for the good of just all the citizens who're going to live here.

*Talk to us about sort of the basic farming infrastructure and other resources needed for farming.*

(00:47:39)

**John Bennett:** Yeah, that's an interesting idea the notion that there is infrastructure, sort of basic needs of farmers to be successful. Is there a feed store, a place where I can get feed for my animals? A place where I can get new implements or have my tractor repaired? Is there a place -- somebody who grows animals that I can get manure from to put on my field to grow hay, or grow wheat, or whatever I'm doing and to fertilize it in a natural way as opposed to buying an expensive and perhaps environmentally more threatening non-organic, non-natural fertilizer? (00:48:21) So what happens in growth areas sometimes is if you don't have that critical mass, then those larger farms and even the smaller ones have difficulty getting the things that they need to operate. They have to go farther to find manure. They have to go farther to find the feed and to take the tractor for repair. They have to go farther to do -- and ultimately, it becomes less and less profitable the greater distance you have to go. (00:48:53) And that actually, in fact, affects all of the businesses that use agricultural products. I asked some professors at Utah State to tell me how far the Gossner Cheese Factory, how far from the factory did we need to have farms in order for them to profitably deliver milk for the cheese? And the answer was it's an expanding range, but what the issue was diesel fuel. (00:49:23) And one of the -- what the cost of diesel fuel is. If you look at the cost of diesel fuel over a ten-year period and the cost of agricultural

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products, the cost of food prices, they track exactly. So when the value -- the cost of diesel fuel goes up, the cost of food goes up. Well again, if you have to haul the fuel farther. If you have to go farther to get the fuel, that adds to that question. (00:49:51) So there's a whole bunch of those infrastructure issues related to agriculture that we don't always think about. We've got to get water there. You've got to get feed for the animals. You've got to get fertilizer of various types. There's a critical mass of agriculture I believe that makes an agricultural -- make agriculture possible in a particular community. (00:50:12) And you've got to have enough farmers to do that. And so, when you're doing land conservation, if you really want to conserve agriculture for the long term, you've got to have enough continuity -- you have to do enough properties in a particular area that you can protect some of that infrastructure so that the feed store can stay in business, for example. And that's difficult because the prices of the land are so high and the easements and other things you might do. (00:50:41) That the tendency is to do one here, and one there, and one there to benefit as many people as possible. But a more effective strategy is to look at, "Can we develop a critical mass in a particular area so that we can allow all of those farmers to be successful." So it's a really important issue that a lot of times we don't think about and communities don't think about as we're regulating and we're deciding where to grow. That becomes an issue in terms of, "Are we pushing out a critical piece of that infrastructure by allowing development in a particular area?"

*How do you think we're doing on that?*

(00:51:19)

**John Bennett:** Well I think the reality is that there're some communities that are really focused on retaining their agriculture. The city of Santaquin, for example, has done a really good job in planning for protecting the orchards in Santaquin. Does that mean they're going to have orchards in Santaquin forever? I don't know. But what it means is at least that community has taken a proactive look at it and said, "What can we do to make it easier for the guys who're growing fruit in Santaquin to stay there? (00:51:50) We like being the fruit capital. We like having these fruit businesses here, and our residents have said that's something they want to do." So that's one thing communities could do better is to focus on, "What do we have to do to keep our agricultural heritage?" There're other places that don't even think about it. (00:52:10) They just say, "We don't care. We don't have any real agriculture -- we may have some people who have chickens, but it's probably illegal. They're not -- we don't want to get into that business." And so, it varies from place to place. But the truth is, Utah County, Weber County probably still have some fairly significant agricultural opportunities. Davis is beginning to be on the edge. There're some big agricultural things going there, but the development is encroaching into the best farmlands. (00:52:42) And that's unfortunate because Davis has some of the best farmlands in the state. But it's the nature of development. Salt Lake County, we don't have a lot left. I mean, Salt Lake County is -- we have some farmers. We have a Farm Bureau. We have -- but the reality is that there just isn't a lot of land that isn't developed that can be used. (00:53:07) And the

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best land, in terms of its potential, is already all developed. So what we have is marginal land. It's hay land. It's land for animals. And it's not necessarily the best places to grow our fruits and vegetables unfortunately.

*Talk to me as a consumer. What can I do to help farmers?*

(00:53:43)

**John Bennett:** Well, a couple things. I mean, one is you can try to buy local products. All of our grocery stores now have Utah's Own Products. The Department of Agriculture has labeled products that have a significant content. So when you go to the grocery store, you can look to buy Utah produce. You can look to buy Utah food products. That's one thing. And anybody can do that. It doesn't change what you do. You just look for products that are Utah's Own. (00:54:11) You can certainly frequent the farmers' markets. You can look to buy CSA shares. You can talk to your elected officials and say, "Do you know --" I mean, this would be an interesting exercise. Ask your city council member do they know how many farms there are within their city or county? Do they know what the economic benefit of those farms is? (00:54:38) Do they regulate them in a way that allows those farmers to continue farming or are they, by the way they're regulating them, are they making it difficult? When they think about farms, do they think about them as a holding zone for development, and therefore, they zone them that way? Or do they think about them as something that they want to have? (00:54:59) And therefore, you zone them in a way that's going to allow for farming in the long term. So it'd be an interesting conversation. Sit down over a Coke and have this conversation with your city council about, "It's important to me that we have some local produce. That there's somebody I can go talk to. I can take my kids to see where stuff really comes from or my grandkids. (00:55:29) And what're you doing as a city or what're you doing as a county to ensure that we don't lose all the agriculture that we have going forward?" Certainly the state has a role in that. And so, talking to state legislators and letting people know that conserving our agricultural lands, that protecting the water supplies, and finding ways to assist farmers is something that's important to you. (00:55:58) They need to hear -- elected officials always need to hear from their constituents. And so, if it's important to people, they ought to make those contacts. I think it's also interesting to think about whether being a farmer, even if it's just a patch of tomatoes in your backyard is something that you'd like to do. Because preserving those skills is a positive thing. Growing something, and then, learning how to can it and preserve it. (00:56:26) Those are things that I think resonate with a lot of Utahans, but we don't all have those skills. And so, learning those skills helps you get a sense for what -- why agriculture's important and why it's important to understand the land and work the land in a way, even if all you do is work it at home. So there're lots of things that you as a consumer, you as an individual, you as a citizen can do to improve the outlook for Utah agriculture. (00:56:54) But it really involves talking to the people who

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make the decisions and letting them know that you care. And then, voting with your money. If you go out to the farmer's market every week and buy some produce, and take it home, you're supporting Utah farmers. Then, you're helping. And so, those are the kinds of things I would recommend.

*I think that's it.*

[END TAPE]