Jeff Ishee: Continuing on with the next question. What areas of agriculture are unique to Virginia as compared to neighboring states? Well, of course we did mention, tobacco production, which is very, concentrated on the south side of Virginia, but we are seeing changes in that industry. , that differentiates Virginia from a lot of states. I believe most tobacco production is now in North Carolina, but also some in Georgia and South Carolina.

Jeff Ishee: What makes Virginia different? Well, we used to have a very strong dairy industry, and we still have a good dairy industry, but we see it fading over time, or maybe fading is not the right word but, we're seeing consolidation. We're seeing a- a lot of very large dairy farms here in the Commonwealth of Virginia, but those mid-size to smaller dairy farms of, say, under 150 head of cattle, they seem to be fading away rather quickly. As a matter of fact, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services confirmed to me just a couple of weeks ago that- that we lost 59 Virginia dairy farms in the year 2018, , and that was at the rate of about one every six days. So that's, to me, that's an alarming rate. Certainly a trend that we would see in Virginia agriculture is consolidation in the dairy industry.

Jeff Ishee: How else is agriculture unique in Virginia? I think agritourism. We are ideally situated geographically, for agritourism, whether it be your traditional pumpkin patch or you-pick strawberries to local farmers markets to historic sites that involve agriculture. The George Washington birth place has a farm there. , there are numerous historic farms. The Cyrus McCormick farm here in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia gets a lot of tourists. People are very interested in- in where their food comes from and the history of how that food was produced.

Jeff Ishee: So, I think that truly offers a unique opportunity for a lot of landowners and farmers, and- and also specifically for the wine industry. I think that they will do very well over the next couple of decades because they are, they're going after the tourism market. , they're going after hosting farm, weddings and corporate meetings and- and they're bringing people in to the vineyards, and vineyards are very attractive places. If you've never been to one, I suspect most of you have, you know how beautiful they can be spring, summer, and fall. And so, they attract a lot of people and there's an opportunity there to make some really good money.

Jeff Ishee: Next question. How has the agricultural landscape changed over the past 25 years, specifically with local foods and farm to table? When I first moved here in the mid-1990s, the farmers’ market trend was just getting started. I believe we had probably 30 or 40 public farmers markets in the Commonwealth of Virginia. In 2018, we had well over 250 public farmers markets here in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and it proves to me and I think most of us have always known but it's never been so- so evident, is people want to know where their food comes from and they truly want to know how it was produced.

Jeff Ishee: So, local foods, this farm to table, I do not believe it is a fad. I do not believe it is a trend. I do we- believe that we'll see some stability in the number of farmers markets over the next few years. There's probably, in my judgment, too many farmers markets right now. , every small town in Virginia wants a public farmers market because they're attractive, they're a social gathering place, they enhance tourism, and they're good for local farmers. But, we can't have in every small town in Virginia a public farmers market. The truth is, we just don't have enough farmers. , that's just the fact.

Jeff Ishee: So, how else has the agricultural landscape changed over the past 25 years? I have seen and I am continuing to see more women involved in Virginia agriculture as farm owners and managers, and women are perfectly capable of doing everything a man can do on a farm. That is, that is my belief, and with modern machinery, we're not out there throwing hay bales and doing all the things that we used to have to do on a farm, but in my opinion, a woman can do everything a man can do on a farm. And I am seeing more young women involved in Virginia agriculture. They tend to come in through the local foods movement and on small acreages, 10 acres or less, growing vegetables or growing hops for the craft beer industry, things like that, wine grapes. Women are certainly more involved in Virginia agriculture than I have ever seen.