

Candidates share ag views

By **HOLLY SPANGLER** and **PAM GOLDEN**

AS the nation prepares to elect a new president next month, *Carolina-Virginia Farmer* sought to travel beyond the sound bites on agricultural policy. The questions and answers below from Sen. John McCain and Sen. Barack Obama are relevant not only to our farmer readers, but also in many ways to the general public, as queries about ethanol, food vs. fuel, trade and farm subsidies continue to make headlines outside the agricultural press.

CV: If elected president, the most recent farm bill won't expire in your term. Would you do anything in the next four years to address any problems you see with the current legislation?

Obama: It's important to implement the 2008 Farm Bill in keeping with the intent of Congress. The legislation is the product of more than 18 months of difficult negotiations that attempted to satisfy a complex set of competing priorities. If particular provisions are difficult to administer or present technical challenges to the Department of Agriculture, I will work with leaders from both parties in Congress and relevant stakeholders to make appropriate adjustments that are acceptable to the key stakeholders involved.

As president, I will work to ensure that the protections in the bill against gaming the system are properly enforced and I will work with Congress to push for greater reform to ensure that payments are targeted appropriately.

McCain: I support a risk management program for farmers. When a farmer suffers from a natural disaster such as droughts or floods, we should assist them — this is a commitment we have made to our farmers and I will honor it. As president, I will fight on behalf of family farmers to enact reasonable reforms to our crop insurance program and our system of countercyclical and direct payments.

CV: What steps would you take to improve our renewable fuels policy?

Obama: I will focus my efforts in two key areas to:

■ Mandate all new vehicles are Flexible Fuel Vehicles (FFV). Sustainably-produced biofuels can create jobs, protect the environment and help end oil addiction — but only if Americans drive cars that will take such fuels. I will work with Congress and auto companies to ensure that all new vehicles have FFV capability by the end of my first term in office.

■ Develop the next generation of sustainable biofuels and infrastructure. Advances in biofuels, including cellulosic ethanol, biobutenol and other new technologies that produce synthetic petroleum from sustainable feedstocks offer tremendous potential to break our addiction to oil. I will work to ensure that these clean alternative fuels are developed and incorporated into our national supply as soon as possible. I will require

at least 60 billion gallons of advanced biofuels by 2030. I will also invest federal resources, including tax incentives and government contracts into developing the most promising technologies and building the infrastructure to support them.

McCain: I believe alcohol-based fuels hold great promise as both an alternative



EXCLUSIVE: To read the complete set of questions and answers, see Web Exclusives at www.Carolina-VirginiaFarmer.com.

to gasoline and as a means of expanding consumers' choices. Some choices such as ethanol are on the market right now. The second generation of alcohol-based fuels like cellulosic ethanol, which won't compete with food crops, are showing great potential.

I support Flex-Fuel Vehicles and believe they should play a greater role in our transportation sector. In just three years, Brazil went from new cars sales that were about 5% FFVs to over 70% of new vehicles that were FFVs. American automakers have committed to make 50% of their cars FFVs by 2012. I will call on automakers to make a more rapid and complete switch to FFVs.

CV: What steps might you take as president to stabilize fertilizer prices?

Obama: A major key to stabilizing fertilizer prices is addressing the skyrocketing costs of natural gas. Through my policies for continued domestic production combined with investments in efficiency, we will take some of the pressure off the resource and increase supply, bringing costs down.

McCain: I believe in promoting and expanding the use of our domestic supplies of natural gas. When people are hurting, and struggling to afford gasoline, food, and other necessities, common sense requires that we draw upon America's own vast reserves of oil and natural gas. Within the United States we have tremendous reserves of natural gas. The Outer Continental Shelf alone contains 77 trillion cubic feet of recoverable natural gas. It is time that we capitalize on these significant resources and build the infrastructure needed to transport this important component of electricity generation and transportation fuel around the country.

CV: As we author trade agreements, are there ways to level the playing field in regard to individual countries' regulations, such as employee conditions and chemical use?

Obama: For too long, Washington has put the interests of free trade ahead of broader concerns about our economy

and American workers. I will break from the failed trade policies of the last eight years. As president, I will ensure that our trade agreements include strong, enforceable labor and environmental provisions in the core of the agreements. And I will direct the U.S. Trade Representative to aggressively protect intellectual property rights, monitor our trading partners to ensure they are complying with the terms of agreements, and take action when violations are found.

McCain: I believe that globalization is an opportunity for American workers today and in the future. Ninety-five percent of the world's customers lie outside our borders, and we need to be at the table when the rules for access to those markets are written. To do so, the U.S. should engage in multilateral, regional and bilateral efforts to reduce barriers to trade, level the global playing field and build effective enforcement of global trading rules.

CV: What would be your policy concerning greenhouse gases? How would it affect farmers? Would you pursue approving the Kyoto Treaty?

Obama: As a result of climate change, the polar ice caps are shrinking causing sea levels to rise; extreme weather is wreaking havoc across the globe; droughts are becoming more severe, tropical diseases are migrating north and numerous species are being threatened with extinction. To address this challenge, I support implementation of an economy-wide cap-and-trade system to reduce carbon emissions by the amount scientists say is necessary: 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. This market mechanism has worked before and will give all American consumers and businesses the incentives to use their ingenuity to develop economically effective solutions to climate change.

I will use some of the revenue generated from this cap-and-trade permit auction to invest in climate-friendly energy development and deployment. This will transform the economy, especially in rural America, which is poised to produce more renewable energy than ever before, creating millions of new jobs across the country. I will also develop domestic incentives that reward forest owners, farmers and ranchers when they plant trees, restore grasslands or undertake farming practices that capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, creating new opportunities for rural America to help solve the climate crises.

McCain: I will propose a cap-and-trade system that would set limits on greenhouse gas emissions while encouraging the development of low-cost compliance options. A climate cap-and-trade mechanism would set a limit on greenhouse gas emissions and allow entities to buy and sell rights to emit, similar to the successful acid rain trading program of the early 1990s. The key feature of this mechanism is that it allows the market to decide and encourage the lowest-cost compliance options.



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