

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This Blessed Earth: A Year in the Life of an American Family Farm

1. How does *This Blessed Earth* compare to your personal experiences with family farming, or to what you had imagined family farming is like today?
2. How do family farmers and agribusiness companies use nostalgia to sell farm products? What kinds of myths and misperceptions does this promote?
3. How did soybeans become one of the most successful crops in America?
4. How did the development of hybrid seeds contribute to the dramatic rise in crop yields? What are the implications and the impact on farming of the tight control that companies have over GMO seeds?
5. How has farm irrigation technology developed over the last century? How has this impacted the Ogallala Aquifer?
6. What does Rick think happens after dangerous chemicals like DDT are banned? Could family farms be completely organic?
7. How do Meghan's opinions about cattle branding differ from Rick's?
8. Why is family farm succession so difficult?
9. Meghan says, "The hardest part of my job is working with family, but that's also the best part of my job." Why is this?
10. In what ways is government involved in family farming? How do government policies help family farms? How do they hurt farmers?
11. What are Rick and Meghan's concerns about the proposed Keystone XL Pipeline?
12. What are some causes of farm failures? Why don't highest yields always mean highest profits?
13. What economic conditions led to the Farm Crisis of the 1980s? Do similar conditions exist today?
14. What advantages do small family farms have over consolidated agribusiness companies? What are some disadvantages?
15. What is the future of family farming?

