

Good morning, Board of Directors. As all of you know, from 2000 to 2007, the US lost four million acres in cultural land to development. It is really the size of Massachusetts. And although there are federal policies targeted to combat this loss of farmland, they are not nearly enough to deal with this problem we have here at home.

And so I'll speak about three things. Firstly, what I intend to find out on my upcoming trips to EU, Japan, and Australia, who I intend to find out this information from. Secondly, what opportunities I see in these trips for cross-contextual learning. And thirdly, what challenges I anticipate translating this learning to ideas and strategies that are really useful for us here in the US.

So firstly, in these regions we intend to focus on three critical issues drawn from the problems here at home. We termed the three Ps-- place, policies, and people. So firstly, this very strong geographical notion of place and a battle for it. The US is losing its finest land to development, and we want to find out in these regions how they view the trade-off between development and farmland protection, or if it even exists for them in the first place.

Secondly, we want to find out what policies these regions have to combat the development of farmland into other uses and that impact on performance, and thirdly, the people. We want to find out the cultural institutions the cultural mindsets to our buttressing cases and policies, essentially what the stakeholders of these farming communities are responding to the policies that are being developed.

So who do we intend to find out this information from? We intend to look for stakeholders' business industry that are driving the interaction between farmland and development. And they will inform us most about the issues of place. We also intend to talk to the chairpersons and culture committees in EU member states, as well as officials in pockets of every culture in Japan, Australia, to find out about their experiences, that challenges, and their successes when dealing with farmland protection policies.

We also plan to look at the people to whom these effects of policies are filtering down to the members of the farming community. Who through their individually unique stories, as opposed to just policy memos and big data will inform us most about issues of people. We need these three pieces together to find out what was intended, what is happening, and what it really should be.

So the next idea I'll would like to talk about would be the why I want to visit these three countries, what opportunities there are. Is it really necessary and valuable endeavor? And I would say yes because these three regions are similar enough to the US to raise the possibility of opportunities for learning, and yet different enough to guarantee these opportunities for learning. So the US the EU, Japan, Australia, they are like the US next industrialized nations.

If you look beyond the broad similarities of wealth, power, development levels, inference, a whole host of differences appear. They are located in different parts of the world-- the Western Hemisphere, Asia, and the Southern Hemisphere-- there are different geographies, histories, neighborhoods, contexts, and ideologies. And these differences drive cross-contextual learning for two reasons.

Firstly, they greatly reduce the learning curve for looking at the effects of different policies by providing a test bed with exposed results as well. So instead of sitting up with all of us debating the merits and demerits of increased intervention in farming policies, we need only look at Japan-- highest-producing support levels among OECD countries, overly protective subsidies that have driven average annual household income levels 25% to 30% higher than the national average in Australia, the second lowest producer support levels of OECD countries and where a strong adherence to market-oriented policies has actually created a different result from Japan.

And secondly, these countries also provide us with different ideas that we might not have considered before. For example, the European Union's common agriculture policy contracts with farmers for the provision of ecological services, which is alternative to the traditional notion here in US where farmland policy is essentially meant to protect land for productive purposes. So essentially, exposure to these new ideas would provide us a bigger toolkit to develop more robust strategies for farmland protection here in the US.

But with these great opportunities also come great challenges in two forms, essentially-- differences in institutions and differences in cultural. So differences in institutions like political systems, laws-- they essentially make policies not all but irrelevant to the United States in a certain vein. In European Union, they have a greater acceptance of regional-international treaties and conventions. And this has implications for trying to transplant policies across the Atlantic and culture.

We cannot underestimate the influx of culture, history, and policies. For example, after all, in Japan, the reason for the high levels of producer support can be traced back to the memories shortage that occurred after World War II, something that cannot be said of the US. So what may be popular in my country may be wildly unpopular in another.

So what we intend to do on our trip is not to be transplanters of these policies back to the US. We intend to be translators where we take the spirit and not let letter of these policies and combine it with the our understanding of the realities here in the US to develop a selection of ideas that circumvent differences in institutions and account for differences in culture. That said, even in the US, the institutions do change and cultures do evolve [INAUDIBLE] at a much lower rate. And even within a country, cultures do vary very widely. So even ideas that seem improbable for now should not be discarded, but kept for future reference so whenever the time comes, we are ready to implement them.

So in conclusion, my trips will have great [INAUDIBLE] opportunities, but also affront with challenges, but an appreciation that points that differences in countries are the drivers of learning, and not similarities, and also an appreciation that policy-learning observations are just a start to create a translation effort should allow us to reap the full benefits of our trips. Thank you for attending.