The demand for local foods keeps expanding, and you see it mentioned in magazines, books and other media. There could be a hundred vegetable farms like ours in Macon County, supplying middle Tennessee with fresh produce so they wouldn't have to keep getting it from California and Mexico. The demand is there, and we could supply it.

But before we started all those farms, I'd want an impact study done. It would mean an increase in traffic here, as people come to get the produce. There would be more jobs on farms and we would need to look at who would be doing the work. What would the water usage be, and how would the produce farms deal with their wastes?

Property values might change with a hundred produce farms in Macon County. If people didn't want to live next to a vegetable farm, the property near it would decrease in value. In that case, the tax base for the whole county would go down too.

We have seen property values go up a lot in the last decade. This doesn't put money in our pockets as much as it gives us the opportunity to borrow money more easily. It has helped me expand my business by purchasing another tractor.

For many of us, our life savings are in our homes and land. It's a good place to put them. As they say, three is not more land being made. It will hold it's valued unless something moves in nearby that you don't want to live next to.

Impact studies are commonly done before a big project is done, or a new industry moves in. For example, the Highway 10 project will require an impact study. They'll want to know how erosion will be dealt with and what will happen in Goose Creek. Another aspect will be the removal of homes and how that will affect those people. Traffic will be slow during the construction, and we'll want an impact study on how to deal with that.

With a hundred more vegetable farms, we would want to know if our roads could handle the trucks, and if people would mind. Energy usage would be a consideration. If immigrant workers were hired, how would that affect our community?

Most impact studies deal with the environment, although property values and social aspects are

important as well. How new things affect water, air, and the land, need to be thought about before they happen. Once these precious resources are harmed, they are hard to repair.

Macon County lives off wonderfully pure spring water. But, as we learned last year, it is in limited quantities. Our air is also of the highest quality. It smells good up here on the highland rim, away from the Nashville basin. Our land, too, has been loved and taken good care of. It is rich and capable of growing good crops.

Before we start growing a lot of vegetables here, we would want to be sure our water, air and land would not be negatively affected. We would want to know that property values would not decline. And we would want to understand the social aspects of such a change. Impact studies are the way to learn about what would happen when a new thing is being considered.