Rather than sort the data directly, create a "serpentine counter". Then step through the counter and at each step pull any matching records from the input data and append them to the output data.

If 3 variables have ranges 1-2, 3-5, 6-9 then normal and serpentine counters look like this:

```
Normal    Serpentine
1 3 6     1 3 6
1 3 7     1 3 7
1 3 8     1 3 8
1 3 9     1 3 9

1 4 6     1 4 9
1 4 7     1 4 8
1 4 8     1 4 7
1 4 9     1 4 6

1 5 6     1 5 6
1 5 7     1 5 7
1 5 8     1 5 8
1 5 9     1 5 9

2 3 6     2 5 9
2 3 7     2 5 8
2 3 8     2 5 7
2 3 9     2 5 6

2 4 6     2 4 6
2 4 7     2 4 7
2 4 8     2 4 8
2 4 9     2 4 9

2 5 6     2 3 9
2 5 7     2 3 8
2 5 8     2 3 7
2 5 9     2 3 6
```

Example code can be found and downloaded as follows:

https://github.com/sgarrow/serpentine