

 **Board of Directors | Meeting Summary**

August 6, 2019
By Phone

**Directors Present**

Keira Franz, National Association of Wheat Growers; Suzy Friedman, Environmental Defense Fund; Michelle French, ADM; Stefani Grant, Unilever; Margaret Henry, PepsiCo; Melissa Ho, World Wildlife Fund; Brandon Hunnicutt, National Corn Growers Association; Mark Isbell, USA Rice Federation; Michelle Nutting, Nutrien; Gary O’Neill, NRCS; Jeremy Peters, National Association of Conservation Districts; Ryan Sirolli, Cargill; Jun Zhu, University of Arkansas

**Staff and Consultants**

Rod Snyder, Field to Market; Betsy Hickman, Field to Market; Eric Coronel, Field to Market; Chisara Ehiemere, Field to Market; Paul Hishmeh, Field to Market; Jamie Richards, Field to Market; Allison Thomson, Field to Market; Ray Stewart, Thomson Coburn

Motions

* *A motion was made by Margaret Henry and seconded by Mark Isbell to approve the consent agenda. Motion passed unanimously.*
* *A motion was made by Mark Isbell and seconded by Michelle Nutting to approve the MOU with Soil Health Partnership and to allow staff to finalize the language of the agreement. Motion passed unanimously.*
* *A motion was made by Melissa Ho and seconded by Mark Isbell to approve the MOU with Farm Journal’s Trust in Food initiative. Motion passed unanimously.*

Next Steps and Action Items

* *Next Step: Reconvene the original Board subgroup on Mission/Vision/Goals revisions (Stefani Grant, Mark Isbell, Franklin Holley, Jeremy Peters, Michelle Nutting and Ryan Sirolli) with any additional volunteers to consider revised language to the Goals statements taking into consideration the input received during the June General Assembly meeting. Staff will work on revised language and will schedule a call to review with the subgroup in September.*
* *Next Step: The Board Taskforce on Farmer Livelihoods will consist of Mark Isbell, Ryan Sirolli, Stefani Grant, Gary O’Neill and Suzy Friedman. Staff will schedule a call to discuss how Field to Market can ensure farmer profitability is considered throughout our programs.*
* *Next Steps: The Board will consider the key questions related to project registrations and the Continuous Improvement Accelerator and review the final process-based standard document ahead of the Board Retreat in October.*
* *Action Item: Review and approve the process-based standard during the October meeting.*
* *Action Item: Licensing see structure discussion added to the October Board meeting agenda.*
* *Action Item: A revised proposal for the Research Database, including recommended revisions will be added to the October Board meeting agenda.*

Proceedings

 **Opening**

Board Chair, Stefani Grant called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. and read the Antitrust Statement.

**Review of Prior Business**

Stefani reviewed old business and referred the Board to the slide deck for business that was on the call agenda, as well as items that will be discussed at the Board Retreat in October.

**Consent Agenda**

Review and approval of the meeting minutes from June 24, 2019 as well as review and approval of two new membership applications.

* Valagro (Agribusiness, Full)
* SustainCERT (Affiliate, Full)

Board members also reviewed the list of Standing Committee co-chair appointments.

*A motion was made by Margaret Henry and seconded by Mark Isbell to approve the consent agenda. Motion passed unanimously.*

**Finance and Operations Update**

*Finance -* Rod reviewed the June Financials and reported cash on hand $1,252,800 with revenue at $2,040,926 and expenses of $1,466,625. He also gave a brief update on the impact of membership losses and attrition on the overall budget. In 2019, Field to Market has lost 20 members representing a loss of $220,000 in dues revenue while adding 10 new members representing an additional $125,000. The current budget variance stands at $120,000. He shared the membership recruitment targets and asked the board about existing relationships to assist in recruitment.

*Digital Properties* - Betsy gave an update on the ongoing work with Taoti including a review of the finalized master service agreement with a total project budget of $170,505. The initial kickoff meeting is scheduled for August 9 and the project directory and partnership exchange as well as an integrated sign-on are expected to be completed in time for the November Plenary.

*Board Liaisons* - Stefani reviewed the standing committee and advisory council liaisons and thanked Board members for their willingness to serve.

* Awards and Recognition – Diane Herndon, Nestle Purina
* Education and Outreach – Suzy Friedman, EDF
* Metrics – Mark Isbell, USA Rice
* Verification – Margaret Henry, PepsiCo
* Science Advisory Council – Gary O’Neill, USDA NRCS
* Technology Advisory Council – Michelle French, ADM

*QDMP Network -* Rod reviewed the newly formed Qualified Data Management Partner Network. As the network of QDMPs has continued to grow, staff believes that a more formalized group is important for communicating Fieldprint Platform updates, as well as receiving more regular feedback from partners. Currently six companies have entered into data management license agreements with Field to Market, all of which will be members of the network. The network will serve as a non-voting body with no term limits.

**Proposed MOU with Soil Health Partnership**

Stefani reviewed the background of the proposed MOU with the Soil Health Partnership and explained the five key areas of future collaboration:

* Exploring opportunities to leverage and promote the Soil Health Partnership’s research on soil management practices, including the environmental and economic benefits of healthy soils; and
* Publishing joint educational materials and case studies that highlight the connection between healthy soils and sustainability outcomes; and
* Promoting connectivity between the Soil Health Partnership’s network of demonstration farms and Field to Market’s member-driven projects with value chain partners; and
* Utilizing Field to Market’s metrics, where appropriate, as a mechanism to document and demonstrate continuous improvement in sustainability outcomes on Soil Health Partnership demonstration farms; and
* Participating in the other’s meetings and work sessions and providing feedback and expertise where needed.

Stefani asked the Board to approve the MOU in principle while allowing staff to finalize the language.

*A motion was made by Mark Isbell and seconded by Michelle Nutting to approve the MOU with Soil Health Partnership and to allow staff to finalize the language of the agreement. Motion passed unanimously.*

**Proposed MOU with Farm Journal’s Trust in Food**

Stefani reviewed the proposed MOU and the four potential areas of collaboration with Farm Journal’s Trust in Food initiative:

* Opportunities to leverage Farm Journal’s reach and influence with Field to Market’s sustainability metrics and process-based standard to promote continuous improvement and cross-supply-chain learnings
* Promote growth of Field to Market’s sustainability metrics and member-driven projects
* Produce original research, collate existing data and disseminate ongoing reports including the annual Sustainability Research Report, led by Trust in Food and co-branded with Field to Market
* Leverage in-kind support from Trust in Food to advance continuous improvement objectives of member-driven projects

Stefani also noted that Field to Market worked with Farm Journal on the Sustainability Research Report in its first year, but this MOU would give us the ability to help shape the questions and topics featured. The Board asked if there was any financial obligation as part of the MOU and Rod clarified that there were no financial obligations. The MOU is meant to solidify the intent to work together.

*A motion was made by Melissa Ho and seconded by Mark Isbell to approve the MOU with Farm Journal’s Trust in Food initiative. Motion passed unanimously.*

**Next Steps for Revision of Goals Statement**

Stefani reviewed the discussion of the membership at the General Assembly regarding proposed revisions to Field to Market’s Mission, Vision and Goals statements. She asked the Board about next steps regarding how best to advance a revised Goals statement for discussion and approval at the upcoming November Plenary. The Board focused its discussion on the disagreement within membership regarding the concept of “suitable” cropland within the land use goal. Both Agribusiness and Grower sectors expressed concerns about Field to Market’s role in defining the term. Members of the Civil Society Sector acknowledged these concerns and noted its effort to highlight the issue but to note make Field to Market the arbiter of determining suitable croplands.

*Next Step: Reconvene the original Board subgroup on Mission/Vision/Goals revisions (Stefani Grant, Mark Isbell, Franklin Holley, Jeremy Peters, Michelle Nutting and Ryan Sirolli) with any additional volunteers to consider revised language to the Goals statements taking into consideration the input received during the June General Assembly meeting. Staff will work on revised language and will schedule a call to review with the subgroup in September.*

**Establish Scope of Board Task Force on Farmer Livelihoods**

Stefani reminded the Board that we announced the creation of Board level taskforce on farmer livelihoods during the General Assembly meeting in June. She asked for one representative from each sector to serve on the taskforce, which will present its findings and suggestions at the November Plenary.

*Next Step: The Board Taskforce on Farmer Livelihoods will consist of Mark Isbell, Ryan Sirolli, Stefani Grant, Gary O’Neill and Suzy Friedman. Staff will schedule a call to discuss how Field to Market can ensure farmer profitability is considered throughout our programs.*

**Review Draft of Process-based Standard**

Rod reviewed the concept of the process-based standard and noted that the draft document was still being finalized and would be shared within the next few days. He also announced our intent to brand the flexible project framework as the Continuous Improvement Accelerator.

Betsy reviewed the process-based standard and its importance in publicly defining and communicating Field to Market’s approach to sustainable agriculture. The intent is to standardize the way in which projects pursue continuous improvement and allow for broader credible communications and claims from participating members. Betsy also noted the two phases of implementation that would allow projects to initially define their intent and scope and then more fully expand into a continuous improvement plan. Chisara reviewed the project registration form and noted that the form was roughly based on the earlier continuous improvement template that was developed by the Verification Committee.

The Board asked for clarification on the definition of partners throughout the accelerator and asked for hyperlinks or tooltips for definitions of project pathways and other items that might need further explanation for members when registering a project.

Chisara discussed the next steps for the Accelerator and process-based standard and proposed some key questions for Board consideration:

* How do we ensure that we are striking the right balance between credibility and ease of implementation in order to reach 2021 scaling targets (*204 projects / 7.5M acres*)?
* Are there any concerns about the core eligibility requirements?
	+ For example, Fishery Progress requires projects to provide proof of budget (*e.g. high-level aggregation of available funding and estimated expenses*). Is this requirement important to Field to Market’s ability to scale projects?
* Does the standard clearly identify Field to Market’s approach and the requirements of projects, both universally and pathway-specific, to external stakeholders?
* What additional clarification is needed to support members in implementing the standard?
* What refinements would you like to see before opening the standard for member comment?

The Board discussed some initial concerns about over-defining items and the requirement to provide budgeting or expense information. Additional comments and feedback should be sent to Betsy and Chisara.

*Next Steps: The Board will consider the key questions related to project registrations and the Continuous Improvement Accelerator and review the final process-based standard document ahead of the Board Retreat in October.*

*Action Item: Review and approve the process-based standard during the October meeting.*

**Overview of Current Licensing Structure and Fee Schedule**

Rod reviewed recent analysis from staff on current levels of membership revenue, project participation and licensing fees. He noted that there was no intent to increase member dues for full members, but rather to consider the member benefits and licensing fees for associate members in light of the new products and digital properties being developed. Currently, member dues account for 80% of total revenue whereas licensing fees account for 2%.

Rod asked the Board to consider the following:

* How do we continue to provide value to members that are not engaged in projects and attract more members to participate in projects?
* How does the new project directory impact our ability to increase licensing fee revenue (i.e. “claims” take on a different form within a public-facing project directory)?
* How do we capture non-member interest and activity (e.g. smaller companies that wish to buy into projects at a lower level)?
* How do we ensure our license fee structure doesn’t disincentivize scale (e.g. implications of per-acre or per-project fees)?

The Board expressed concerns over groups who benefit from projects but never pay a licensing fee and some of the loopholes that currently exist. The Board discussed developing an additional structure to allow non-members to make sourcing claims.

*Action Item: Licensing Fee Structure discussion added to the October Board meeting agenda.*

**Science Advisory Council Recommendation for Research Database**

Allison Thomson reported that the Science Advisory Council is still working on feedback received from the Board during the June meeting regarding a proposed research database. The council has constructed a survey to reach out to QDMPs to gather feedback on implementing such a database. The Grower Sector has also expressed a strong interest in the database and wants to ensure that policies don’t prohibit their access.

*Action Item: A revised proposal for the Research Database, including recommended revisions will be added to the October Board meeting agenda.*

Jamie Richards reviewed the action items and key decisions as discussed during the call. Stefani reviewed the calendar of events for the Board, including the October retreat at Oak Spring Garden Foundation in Upperville, Virginia. The Board discussed the Sustainable Agriculture Summit and Field to Market November Plenary. Board members with suggestions for topics for either event should contact Rod.

There being no further business, the Board of Directors call adjourned at 2:41pm.