

 **Board of Directors | Meeting Summary**

October 9-10, 2019
*Oak Spring Garden Foundation*, Upperville, Va.

**Directors Present**

Keira Franz, National Association of Wheat Growers; Suzy Friedman, Environmental Defense Fund; Michelle French, ADM; Stefani Grant, Unilever; Margaret Henry, PepsiCo; Diane Herndon, Nestle Purina; Melissa Ho, World Wildlife Fund; Franklin Holley, Keystone; Mark Isbell, USA Rice Federation; Michelle Nutting, Nutrien; 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; Jamie Richards, Field to Market; Allison Thomson, Field to Market; Ray Stewart, Thomson Coburn

Motions

* *A motion was made by Diane Herndon and seconded by Melissa Ho to approve the consent agenda. Motion passed unanimously.*
* *A motion was made by Margaret Henry and seconded by Ryan Sirolli to approve the proposed revisions to the Field to Market Goals statement and send it to the General Assembly for adoption. Motion carried unanimously.*
* *A motion was made by Michelle French and seconded by Suzy Friedman to accept the proposed budget with approved changes. Motion carried unanimously.*

Next Steps and Action Items

* *Margaret Henry, Keira Franz and Michelle Nutting will consult with members from each of their sectors to solicit suggestions and feedback on licensing fees and associate membership dues. This will be added to the sector meeting agendas for November. Staff will compile feedback for the Executive Committee and will revisit in November and possibly in early 2020.*
* *Proposed revisions to the Goals statement will be discussed on each sector pre-plenary call and at each sector meeting in November. Additional changes or revisions should be submitted in writing prior to the General Assembly meeting on November 19.*
* *Delay launch of the Process Based Standard and Continuous Improvement Accelerator by six months, retain the three defined pathways, take initial feedback and make some of the proposed changes, open a second member comment period. Address the changes, delay and implementation at the November Plenary.*
* *Board will discuss capacity building for SPARC at the November meeting.*
* *Develop a one-page infographic about membership along with a one-paragraph summary for membership. Make it easy to access online, send it out with the membership survey at the end of the year as well as with the invoices in 2020*

Proceedings

 **Opening**

Board Chair, Stefani Grant called the meeting to order at 12:31 p.m. and Ray Stewart read the Antitrust Statement.

**Review of Prior Business**

Rod Snyder reviewed old business and referred the Board to the slide deck for business that was on the call agenda.

**Consent Agenda**

Review and approval of the meeting minutes from August 6, 2019, formalized recommendations for terms and appointment process for Advisory Councils, and review and approval of four new membership applications.

* Fall Line Capital, LLC (Agribusiness, Full)
* Arva Intelligence Corp. (Agribusiness, Full)
* Ecosystem Services Market Consortium (Civil Society, Full)
* Context Network, LLC (Agribusiness, Full)

*A motion was made by Diane Herndon and seconded by Melissa Ho to approve the consent agenda. Motion passed unanimously.*

**Finance and Operations Update**

*Finance* – Rod reviewed the August financials and reported cash on hand of $1,020,531 with revenue at $2,346,238 and expenses of $1,887,837. He next reviewed membership renewals and attrition as well as those impacts on the budget. Rod told the Board about the search for a new audit firm, since Field to Market has used Squire, Lemkin and Company for the past four years. Staff will present a recommendation to the Executive Committee for approval later this year.

*Grants* - Rod announced a new NRCS grant which will contribute to an ongoing workstream, building on benchmarking in the Fieldprint Platform. He noted this is a matching grant in dollars for the next twenty-four months, a statement will be sent to stakeholders in the coming weeks.

**Review Associate Member Dues and License Fee Structure**

Rod reviewed the current revenue and status of licensing fees and associate member dues levels. The Board discussed several restructuring considerations including an option for smaller business that only want to participate in portions of project acres. The Board also discussed the possibility of diversifying revenue streams and asked staff to consider additional sponsorships or charging for harmonization and training work.

*Next Step: Margaret Henry, Keira Franz and Michelle Nutting will consult with members from each of their sectors to solicit suggestions and feedback on licensing fees and associate membership dues. This will be added to the sector meeting agendas for November. Staff will compile feedback for the Executive Committee and will revisit in November and possibly in early 2020.*

**Strategic Plan Implementation: Dashboard of Key Measures of Success**

Rod reviewed an update of the strategic plan dashboard and the Board discussed the status of each goal.

1. *Convene Diverse Stakeholders*

Senior Executive Forum

Rod gave a recap of the second Senior Executive Forum held earlier in the week in New York City. Senior executives felt that the input they provided in 2018 was being acted upon and that Field to Market’s focus was clearer overall. There is a lot of energy around climate change and Field to Market can position itself as a leader on soil carbon sequestration measurement to bring education and opportunities for meaningful action in this space.

Summary of Cross Sector Dialogues

The Board discussed the three dialogues in 2019 and potential topics for 2020. Topics will be determined before the end of the year so staff can plan each dialogue concurrently. Some potential topics include; ag financing and crop insurance, emerging/merging technology, climate change, communicating sustainability, etc.

Preview of Sustainable Ag Summit

Rod reviewed the current schedule and speakers confirmed for the 2019 Sustainable Agriculture Summit in Indianapolis, November 20-21.

Review and Approval of Revised Goals Statement

Stefani reviewed the revisions throughout the year and the proposed changes from the Board subgroup call on September 17. Rod went over some key questions that were brought up by the membership in the proposed changes. The Board discussed clarifying and the intent of the goals as well as their purpose in positioning Field to Market as the leader of sustainable agriculture for commodity crops. After a thorough discussion, the Board approved of the final proposed revisions which will be discussed in each sector meeting and at the General Assembly in November. The Board also agreed that any additional revisions will need to be submitted in writing before the General Assembly meeting as no substantive revisions will be accepted from the floor.

**OUR GOALS**

Field to Market is working to meet the challenge of producing enough food, feed, fiber and fuel for a rapidly growing population while conserving natural resources and improving the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The organization and its members are committed to supporting resilient ecosystems and enhancing farmer livelihoods as **fundamental components** of agricultural sustainability. Field to Market will convene diverse stakeholders to support multi-sector collaboration, while providing useful measurement tools and educational resources for growers and the value chain that track and create opportunities for continuous improvement at scale. Our efforts are guided by the following interdependent goals:

* Biodiversity – Supporting diverse species and ecosystems by conserving and enhancing habitats across U.S. agricultural landscapes
* Energy Use – Increasing energy use efficiency on U.S. cropland
* Greenhouse Gases – Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from U.S. cropland per unit of output, and sustained contribution to reducing the overall greenhouse gas emissions from **agricultural landscapes**
* Irrigation Water Use – **Improving** ~~regional water availability through continuous improvement in~~ irrigation water use efficiency and conservation on U.S. cropland
* Soil Carbon – Increasing soil carbon sequestration on U.S. cropland
* Soil Conservation – **Reducing** soil erosion on U.S. cropland
* **~~Sustainable Intensification~~** ***Land Use*** – ~~Increasing~~ *~~sustainable intensification through~~* ~~efficiency and~~ *~~sustainably improving~~* ~~ed productivity on U.S. cropland~~
***Improving productivity on US cropland***
* Water Quality – Improving regional water quality through reduction in sediment, nutrient and pesticide loss from U.S. cropland

*A motion was made by Margaret Henry and seconded by Ryan Sirolli to approve the proposed revisions to the Field to Market Goals statement and send it to the General Assembly for adoption. Motion carried unanimously.*

*Next Step: Proposed revisions to the Goals statement will be discussed on each sector pre-plenary call and at each sector meeting in November. Additional changes or revisions should be submitted in writing prior to the General Assembly meeting on November 19.*

1. *Provide Science-Based Leadership*

Current Metrics Revision and Timeline

Allison Thomson gave an update on the status of metrics revision and noted that during the member comment period for Water Quality, some issues were raised with the NRCS data for CART. Staff and the Metrics Committee are working with NRCS and others to try and determine a path forward. She also discussed the grant from the Pisces Foundation specifically for work on CART in the Fieldprint Platform, that may need to be revisited.

Soil Carbon

Allison reported on the work with Dagan for a test project, with the potential to take nationally. The Board discussed possible alignment with other members and organizations such as ESMC, TerraTon, Gold Standard, etc. including the potential for additional fundraising on this research area. The Board asked the Metrics Committee to continue its work with Dagan and to explore the possibility of expansion for Field to Market to be a leader on a credible soil carbon metric.

Research Database Proposal

Allison addressed some of the concerns raised by the Board during its meeting in June pertaining to grower and QDMP access to a database. Additional feedback is still needed from QDMPs about potential issues on grower agreements. Allison also clarified that researchers will be asked to help support the overall cost of the database by paying fees, although the specific rates had not yet been determined. Mark Isbell asked for the Research Database proposal to be shared during the Grower Sector meeting in November.

Fieldprint Platform

There are currently six QDMPs working with Field to Market with another two being actively recruited. Allison gave an update on the sensitivity analysis of the platform was completed over the summer and some of the bugs were fixed. Allison reviewed some of the key updates to the platform including alignment with partner organizations, irrigation water use estimator, biodiversity, import/export feature for NRCS crop templates and the creation of project benchmarks. She also noted that the N2O revisions are in phase two with the Fertilizer Institute working on a test project.

1. *Enable Credible Communications*

Betsy reviewed the media impressions and statistics for 2019 thus far, as well as a comparison to 2018. She also announced the 20149 winners of the Sustainability Leadership Awards.

Harmonization and Alignment Updates

Betsy reviewed the current programs with alignment to Field to Market and the Fieldprint Platform. The Board discussed some of the opportunities and weaknesses associated with various other organizations work and Field to Market’s role as a convener across multiple sectors which lends more credibility to the program. Betsy also discussed some of the new programs Field to Market is working on aligning with including the Cotton Trust Protocol, Sustainable Rice Platform, Gold Standard, Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative and the Potato Sustainability Alliance.

Rod noted that the National Potato council is attending the November meeting as is the Potato Sustainability Alliance, with both considering membership. There is some ongoing work for a possible MOU with PSA or a further development of our metric for their program to highlight.

END DAY ONE

DAY TWO

Chair Grant called the meeting to order at 8:30am.

**Strategic Plan Implementation: Dashboard of Key Measures of Success - Continued**

1. *Scale Impact Through Partnerships*

Process Based Standard

Betsy reviewed the work of the Verification Committee and the feedback received during the member comment period on the Process Based Standard. Overall there was appreciation for greater flexibility in project approaches and responsiveness to member feedback to enable claims beyond measurement and impact. However, there were some concerns and suggestions for the standard including:

* Projects seem to be forced to make claims by requiring public plans and annual reporting on progress against those claims.
* Lack of differentiation between project pathways, disincentivizing pursuit of Innovation Projects – asked for clearer language establishing a stepwise approach.
* Requiring three continuous improvement objectives would be too difficult and a request to allow objectives to support directional increases versus quantified change.
* Allowing flexibility in which annual reports are made public and that public reporting be limited to ‘on track’ or ‘off track’ based on FTM staff review of annual reports.
* Flexibility in project types but nowhere else.
* Process Based Standard and associate assurance principles lack enough clarity, which prevents members from feeling confident about transitioning existing projects or registering new projects.
* Confusion about the intended audience for the Standard and that it seems too rigorous and technical.
* Potential for the Standard to add costs to projects due to a greater administrative burden.
* Need for adaptions to continuous improvement objectives due to changes in metrics and results that are subject to wide variations from uncontrollable circumstances.
* Value of additional data needs to be balanced with additional data collection burden for growers and QDMPs.
* Greater transparency on what improvements can and cannot be measured by metrics and what practices impact metrics.
* Timing of projects needs to be defined with clarification about making claims, and if impact claims can be made from 5-year data sets or if more would be needed.

Betsy then reviewed recommendations from staff based on the above feedback:

* Postpone launch of process-based standard until May 1 to give board more time to evaluate member needs, and members more time to transition or register projects. New project directory could still go live in November without delineating project type or continuous improvement goals, etc.
* Keep requirements for SMART continuous improvement objective and set minimum requirement of at least one objective (rather than three).
* Improve member understanding about three types of objectives: engagement, adoption or impact depending on ambition/pathway pursued.
* Transparency in reporting progress against stated objectives is a foundational element of our approach and reporting progress should be required, however, improve flexibility on the goals and objectives to support achievable and realistic results.
* Staff concern that we do not have adequate bandwidth and capacity to support progress evaluation at scale.

Rod told the Board that any recommendations and changes to the Standard and the Continuous Improvement Accelerator would be communicated to members as soon as possible. The Board asked for some clarification on the feedback and recommendations and asked for the Standard to be simplified for members while retaining the full Standard for external partners.

The Board also discussed the harmonization and programmatic alignments with other standards and asked for those to be highlighted in the messaging to members.

*Next Step: Delay launch of the standard and Continuous Improvement Accelerator by six months, retain the three defined pathways, take initial feedback and make some of the proposed changes, open a second member comment period. Address the changes, delay and implementation at the November Plenary.*

 Update on Development of new Digital Properties

Betsy reviewed the timeline of the process and walked through mock-ups of the project directory, partnership exchange and member portal. The Board discussed the partnership exchange and it proposed launch on November 19 as well as the access to the exchange for full versus associate members.

Update on Development/Deployment of SPARC Materials for Trusted Advisors

Betsy reviewed the materials and engagement/use of those materials. The Board discussed ways to make SPARC more impactful and ways to encourage CCA’s to pursue sustainability specialization.

*Action Item: Board will discuss capacity building for SPARC at the November meeting.*

**Review and Approval of FY 2020 Budget**

Stefani reviewed the overall budget and Rod discussed each budget line item, including membership and grants in 2020. The Board discussed potential revenue streams in 2020 and the variance of revenue to expense overall. The Board asked to include an additional revenue account for Training and Services but without a target revenue goal, for Field to Market to begin exploring that as a new revenue source. Rod asked the Board for suggestions on funders or potential research areas that could generate grant revenue.

The Board also looked at the expense line items in the budget to try and realize some savings. The Board asked staff to be conservative wherever they could in expenses and added expanded revenue targets to try and lower the variance between revenue and expenses in 2020.

The Board proposed the following changes to the 2020 budget:

* Membership revenue at $1,950,000
* Grant revenue at $425,000
* Sponsorship revenue at $55,000
* Add a new revenue account line for Training and Services without a budget target
* Plan for a mid-year review of the budget for possible changes in 2020

*A motion was made by Michelle French and seconded by Suzy Friedman to accept the proposed budget with approved changes. Motion carried unanimously.*

*Next Steps: Develop a one-page infographic about membership along with a one-paragraph summary for membership. Make it easy to access online, send it out with the membership survey at the end of the year as well as with the invoices in 2020.*

**Standing Committee, Advisory Council and Task Force updates**

Board Liaisons reviewed the work of each committee and advisory council. The Board also asked for the liaison roles and responsibilities document to be circulated again.

* Awards and Recognition Committee: Diane Herndon
* Education and Outreach Committee: Suzy Friedman
* Metrics Committee: Mark Isbell
* Verification Committee: Rod Snyder
* Science Advisory Council: Allison Thomson
* Technology Advisory Council: Rod Snyder
* Farmer Livelihood Task Force: Stefani Grant
* FTM-USRSB Feed Sustainability Task Force: Betsy Hickman
* Sugar Bett Task Force: Allison Thomson

The Board discussed the work of the Farmer Livelihood Task Force and the outcomes from the call in September including a topic for the Cross-Sector Dialogue series and an update of socioeconomic indicators for the National Indicators Report. The Board asked to consider how to highlight mental health as a key area for farmer livelihoods, and how Field to Market can share work or resources on this topic.

**Review Upcoming Meetings/Events**

Rod and Stefani went over the calendar for the remainder of 2019 including the upcoming Board elections during each sector meeting in November. Stefani also announced her intent not to seek re-election as Board Chair in January.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12 p.m.