Board of Directors | Meeting Summary
June 6, 2017
3:00 PM – 5:00 PM EST
By Phone

Present

Directors

Keith Alverson, National Corn Growers Association; Heather Anfang, Land O' Lakes; Suzy Friedman, Environmental Defense Fund; Stefani Grant, Unilever; Margaret Henry, PepsiCo; Franklin Holley, Field to Market; Marty Muenzmaier, Cargill; Michelle Nutting, Agrium; Gary O'Neill, USDA-NRCS; Debbie Reed, C-AGG; David Schemm, National Wheat Growers Association; Jennifer Shaw, Syngenta; Bob Young, American Farm Bureau Federation; Jun Zhu, University of Arkansas

Staff and Consultants

Catherine Campbell, Field to Market; Chisara Ehiemere, Field to Market; Kate Fairman, Field to Market; Betsy Hickman, Field to Market; Paul Hishmeh, Field to Market; Wil Mannes, Field to Market; Stewart Ramsey, IHS; Rod Snyder, Field to Market; Ray Stewart, Thompson Coburn

Motions

No motions were passed.

Next Steps and Action Items

NEXT STEPS: Change "Research" project to "Demonstration" project.

NEXT STEPS: FTM staff to create unified glossary of terms.

Proceedings

Opening
Stefani Grant opens the meeting. Rod Snyder takes roll. The anti-trust statement is read by Ray Stewart.

Verification Discussion
Stefani kicks off the Verification conversation. She asks Chisara Ehiemere to give an overview of a few items prior to taking comments from the group.

Chisara reminds that group that the Impact Claim verification protocol was covered during the last Board meeting. This included the required documentation needed, the minimum years of data needed (5 years), and the assessment of data by a certified third-party verifier.

Chisara quickly reviews examples of Impact Claims, which were presented on the May 24 Board call. She clarifies that other types of claims could be developed by the organization at a later time. She also clarifies that grower organizations can make non-project participant claims if they aren't official partners on a project. They can support or amplify an impact claim, but must seek approval from Project Owner to share the progress made by growers.

Chisara explains what is not allowed under Impact Claims at this time: attribution claims, comparisons to benchmarks, and input data claims. There is a subgroup of the Board now, headed by Allison Thomson, to explore attribution claims. For comparison to benchmarks, the Verification Committee is considering what it would take to make such a claim. A similar situation arises with input data claims, and the Verification Committee is considering how to deal with this, as well.

Chisara covers three types of projects: Supply Chain Mass Balance, Supply Chain Volume Proxy, and Research. Chisara shares that a question was asked by a Board member on clarification between Mass Balance and Volume Proxy. Another question raised by a Board member was to clarify if there is another way to name "Research" project. Chisara also mentions that the Verification Committee did not set up requirements for Identity Preserve projects at this time, because there are no companies requesting this approach at this time.

The Verification Committee evaluated if FTM should stay with the 10% rule for field selection within a farm. This rule was put into place in 2015, with the intention to re-evaluate in 2017. The Verification Committee discussed this and decided that the 10% rule was still a good fit for the program.

Chisara covers the assessment process for verification. This includes eight distinct steps. She also explains how stringency of the verification process is based upon the scope of the claim. The more complex a claim, the more verification steps are involved.

Chisara gives an update on compliance with ISEAL. She says the ISEAL system is still somewhat divergent from FTM's metrics based approach. A few questions have arisen around project design, verification methodologies, and transparency of metrics. Another potential issue is that FTM does not require signed agreements that legally binding members to abide by our claims protocols. Chisara sits on a steering committee with ISEAL, and she is working with them to bring our approaches closer together.

A question is asked about whether allowing projects to choose their own third-party verifier would create a conflict of interest. Chisara responds that the program is being designed this way to provide flexibility for projects to work with verifiers they are already accustomed to. FTM provides the check against conflict of interest by certifying the third-party verifiers and assessing them at intervals.

Chisara then addresses questions submitted via email and the member portal. The first question concerns the term "research" as a project type. There's a suggestion to label it a "non-volume" project instead. This would distinguish it from the Supply Chain Mass Balance and Supply Chain Volume Proxy projects. A suggestion is made that "non-volume" may not be inclusive enough, especially when talking about a bulk commodity. Other suggestions include "conservation" and "demonstration." It is decided that "Demonstration" is the best fit to replace "Research."

A concern is raised surrounding the role of first aggregator, and if a project specialist can also carry out the responsibilities assigned to the first aggregator. This is of concern for those conducting Fieldprint Projects without a supply chain partner involved. A comment is also made that the names of specific roles are somewhat confusing, because one person may have multiple roles within a project. A suggestion is made that organizations making claims provide language linking individuals to the exact roles set out by FTM. Another suggestion is to provide a caveat that roles in projects do not have to be exactly the way FTM present; a guide rather than a requirement. A comment is made that perhaps less specificity is needed for roles; this is countered by another comment saying roles are necessary for carrying out the verification process.

A request is made to amend the spreadsheet of concerns to reflect changes resulting from this discussion. Another request is made to create a unified glossary of terms. Chisara explains that this is being done, but staff needs to complete a few more projects to ensure that terms are used across multiple documents, including the Fieldprint Project handbook.

Chisara clarifies that if a claim is being made on a specific metric, the third party evaluator will still evaluate all metrics. This is to ensure full transparency around performance of all indicators. A request is made to clarify the language surrounding this.

Stefani lets the Board know that a vote on this will be postponed until the June 20th Board meeting. This allows Board members more time to review the materials and the Q&A spreadsheet from Chisara. Rod suggests an informal workshop of Board member meet by phone next week to discuss Chisara's spreadsheet further. This would take place after the comment period ends. Rod will send a poll to determine the Board's availability.

A question is asked about how FTM will attract third-party verifiers. Betsy Hickman says that FTM will put out a press release on this, and that several third-party verification companies have already shown interest. Rod says that for transparency, the qualified partners will be listed on the FTM website.

NEXT STEPS: Change "Research" project to "Demonstration" project.

NEXT STEPS: FTM staff to create unified glossary of terms.

Adjourn