**Board of Directors | Meeting Summary**

January 10-11, 2017
Washington, DC

Present

**Directors**

In person: Keith Alverson (National Corn Growers Association), Suzy Friedman (Environmental Defense Fund), Stefani Grant (Unilever), Franklin Holley (World Wildlife Fund), Marty Muenzmeier (Cargill), Keith Newhouse (Land O’ Lakes), Michelle Nutting (Agrium), Debbie Reed (Coalition on Agriculture Greenhouse Gases), David Schemm (National Wheat Growers Association), Jennifer Shaw (Syngenta)

By phone: Gary O’Neill (USDA-NRCS), Jun Zhu (University of Arkansas)

**Staff and Consultants**

Catherine Campbell (Marker Campbell), Chisara Ehiemere (Field to Market), Kate Fairman (Field to Market), Betsy Hickman (Field to Market), Paul Hishmeh (Field to Market), Rod Snyder (Field to Market), Ray Stewart (Thompson Coburn), Allison Thomson (Field to Market)

Motions

*Keith Alverson moved to approve the November minutes. Debbie Reed seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.*

*Keith N moved to approve Mars Inc, Michigan State University, and Keystone as members. David Schemm seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.*

*David moved to pursue the MOU with the Stewardship Index for Specialty Crops. Debbie seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.*

*Keith N moved to approve peanuts, corn silage, and barley. Keith A seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.*

Next Steps and Action Items

Next Step: Board subgroup to review bylaws and make recommendations for changes at March Board meeting. Board to make recommendations for bylaw changes to General Assembly at June meeting.

Next Steps: Rod will email out the Work Plan to the Board members, who will then email back comments to Rod.

Next Step: A request is made for the Board to be briefed on the RFP prior to its release.

Next Step: FTM staff to manage expectations for the entire membership regarding Fieldprint Platform Version 3.0 at the June Plenary and General Assembly meeting.

Next Steps: Michael Parks, an attorney from Thompson Coburn specializing in IP issues, will create a one pager on an open source approach to intellectual property. This will be distributed to the Board at the March meeting.

Next Steps: Allison is to collect comments from Science Advisory Council and Board on the proposal for a CAST paper. A vote on the CAST proposal will take place at the March Board meeting.

Next Steps: Board to consider setting timelines for Metrics Subgroups to ensure timely progress is made.

Next Steps: Staff to investigate the possibility of an MOU with Cool Farm Tool. Allison to make recommendation to the BOD about this in March.

Next Steps: Allison to put documentation on Board section of Member Portal regarding the N2O metric revisions. The Board will vote on the revision at the May Board meeting.

Next Step: Staff to schedule an additional, shorter Board call to discuss Fieldprint Platform 3.0 prior to the March Board meeting.

Proceedings

**Opening**

Stefani Grant opens the meeting with a round of introductions. Ray Stewart reads the antitrust statement. Keith Newhouse announces that he is retiring in March 2017 from Land O’ Lakes. Land O’ Lakes will remain an active member of Field to Market (FTM).

Stefani then asks the Board for any corrections or comments on the November 2016 minutes. No comments are made.

*Keith Alverson moved to approve the November minutes. Debbie Reed seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.*

**Finance Update**

Rod Snyder presents an update on FTM’s finances through November 2016. As of November 30, 2016, Field to Market had $997,938 cash on hand. The yearly revenue from January through November was $2,582,094 and expenses totaled $2,433,291.

Rod informs the Board that FTM will conduct an audit of 2016 finances using Squire Lemkin auditing firm again. FTM intends to move up the schedule from last year with the audit being completed in June 2017. FTM will undergo an audit every year, as this is required by many of FTM’s funding partners.

Rod presents an overview of the grants and funding partners for FTM for 2016. This includes that Walton Family Fund at $500,000 over the period of November 2015 to May 2017; the Turner Foundation at $50,000 over the period of December 2015 to November 2016; the Pisces Foundation at $100,000 over the period of October 2016 to December 2017; an NRCS grant at $150,000 for the period of September 2015 to September 2017; and the McKnight Foundation at $100,000 for the period of October 2016 to September 2018. FTM has not yet been invited to reapply for the Turner Foundation grant, but Rod anticipates that FTM will be asked to do so.

**Operations**

For operations updates, Rod informs the Board of the current open job posting at FTM for the Program Manager position. This position will report to Betsy Hickman. FTM will also be hiring an Educational Resource Manager position, although that position is not yet fully funded. This position will also report to Betsy and is an expansion of Catherine Campbell’s role. Catherine’s contract with FTM expires in June and her responsibilities will be moved in-house with the addition of these two new positions.

Rod provides an overview and asks for feedback on the November 2016 Sustainable Agriculture Summit. The Sustainable Agriculture Summit had more than 500 attendees. Rod lets the Board know that for future years, FTM and the Innovation Center for US Dairy will likely need to modify the hosting levels. FTM and the Innovation Center for US Dairy had devoted more staff time and finances than the other partners. In subsequent years, hosting for the Summit will be tiered to indicate the investment from each member organization. A suggestion is made that a joint Board meeting with other Summit partner organizations should be considered.

**Membership**

Kate Fairman presents three prospective members for Board consideration.

 -The Keystone Center (Full membership, Affiliate Sector) – longtime partner of Field to Market. Keystone’s contract with FTM ended at the conclusion of 2016. Keystone would help coordinate interactions between Field to Market and the Midwest Row Crop Collaborative.

 -Mars, Inc. (Full membership, Brands and Retail Sector, $50,000 annual dues)- multi-segmented company representing food, drinks, symbioscience, pet care, and chocolate. Interested in starting two Fieldprint Projects in 2017: one in their chocolate/peanut division and one in their pet care division

 -Michigan State University (Full membership, Affiliate Sector)- Land Grant university with large AgBioResearch department. Bruno Basso, a professor at Michigan State, is on FTM’s Science Advisory Council.

*Keith N moved to approve Mars Inc, Michigan State University, and Keystone as members. David Schemm seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.*

Kate informs that Board that with these new approvals, Field to Market is now up to 121 members, a 37% growth in membership since the January 2016 Board meeting.

The conversation then turns to invoicing for 2017 membership dues. Member organizations could choose their invoice month for 2017 by completing their Membership Information Survey. The bulk of invoicing will be done mid-January. The anticipated revenue from membership renewals is $2,010,000.

Gary O’Neill provides an update from a recent Affiliate Sector call. The call focused on whether the Affiliate Sector should request that their representation on the Board be raised from two members to three members. Currently, the Affiliate Sector has two Board members while all other sectors have three members. Betsy points out to the Board that this changes would require an update to the Bylaw. This would need to be approved by the General Assembly. Betsy suggests that the Board review the entirety of the bylaws at a spring meeting to make all bylaw update recommendations to the General Assembly at the June meeting.

Stefani creates a subgroup for bylaw review. Stefani and Debbie sign up for this subgroup, to be led by Betsy. They will make revision recommendations to the Board at the March Board meeting.

Next Step: Board subgroup to review bylaws and make recommendations for changes at March Board meeting. Board to make recommendations for bylaw changes to General Assembly at June meeting.

**Communications**

Media impressions for FTM are at 69.2 Million, an increase for 260% over 2015 impressions. Most recent coverage has been centered around the release of the National Indicators Report.

Betsy covers some upcoming events that FTM staff will be either attending or speaking at, including the International Poultry Council Sustainability meeting, the Cotton Board Annual Meeting, and Commodity Classic.

Betsy also gives the Board a reminder to sign up for the member portal. She then gives a brief update on the new website and member portal.

**Verification Program Development: Board Work Session**

Chisara informs the Board that this discussion is not a recommendation from the Verification Committee, just an update and Board work session. The Verification Committee is working on defining minimum requirements for projects, though each project/organization can choose to go beyond the minimum. The committee would like the Board to consider implications for Fieldprint Platform (FPP) version 3.0. Finally, they would like the Board to consider scalability of the program over the next 3-5 years.

Proposed impact verification cycles

The verification cycle presented at this meeting was proposed by Control Union, which was hired to help support development of these protocols. Chisara goes over the roles that different parties within a project would play within the verification claim cycle, including Project Owner, Project Specialist, and First Aggregator. The Project Owner is the party that establishes a project, the intended buyer of the product, or the party that plans to make an impact claim. The Project Specialist provides technical support for growers involved in the project and is often employed/contracted by the First Aggregator. It is the job of the Project Specialist to ensure growers understand the project and the Fieldprint Platform. They are also the one working closest with the grower. FTM is committed to no farm level audits or visits during the verification process, so the Project Specialist is as close as we can get to “boots on the ground.” Chisara also defines First Aggregator, which is the first collection point of a product involved in a Fieldprint Project, the party who is responsible for tracking volumes purchased from growers, and responsible for tracking corresponding sales of said product.

Chisara gives a brief overview of the three types of claims that can be made: participation, measurement, and impact. No requests for impact claims have been made at this point, though it will be coming soon. A question is raised from the Board on if FTM would ever want to make some type of claim based on the macro-level aggregated data that FTM collects. Rod believes it would be challenging to do that anytime soon, because it’s too difficult to determine if FTM participating farms can be considered a statistically significant representation of all U.S. commodity crop production. The Board also discusses whether an improvement focused around just one FTM metric can be considered in an impact claim if all indicators haven’t improved. Transparency of data would be important in such instances. These have to be defined before rolling out to membership.

Chisara presents the lifecycle of the proposed six step impact claim verification cycle. (1) After five years of data, the project owner completes the claim request form (which has not yet been created). (2) The project specialist will then submit documentation to the verification body. (3) The documentation needed would be decided based on the type of claim. The first aggregator volume documentation would be submitted to the verification body as well. (4) Then there would be a crosscheck of all documentation by the verification body. (5) The next step would be identifying any discrepancies. (6) The final step would be a decision being made by the verification body.

Chisara then moves the discussion towards accounting systems for volumes and downstream claims. Not all projects need to be tied into an accounting system, but some supply chain projects will want to be. The Verification committee looked at a lot of different systems, and ultimately decided on a “volume proxy registry” (she notes this wording is still in flux). This would be a minimum standard and allow flexibility for different projects. If grower 1 is growing 200 tons, and grower 2 is growing 500 tons, there would be 700 tons available for purchase. The first aggregator would ensure that the tons are not double counted.

Chisara asks the Board how they feel about the process. Feedback was positive overall, though a concern is brought up on whether the 10% rule will become obsolete for some after APIs become more prevalent, since farm management systems will track entire farms, not just 10%. Additionally, the 10% Rule has to be researched more to ensure it is the right number. This will be explored in future meetings.

Chisara presents a slide on why FTM access to data is so important. FTM needs to ensure no double-counting in acres or volumes is done. FTM needs visibility into an anonymized data set supporting the number of growers and acres per grower, which is not currently provided via API. Rod asks the grower groups, in particular, to help Field to Market think about policies to help avoid double counting. The privacy/confidentiality of growers in our program remains paramount. A suggestion is made that the Technology Advisory Council and the grower groups come together and see what a good solution would be.

Chisara goes over qualifications for the Project Specialist, Verifier, and Verification Body. These qualifications were drafted by Control Union. Chisara then goes over the documentation required to make an impact claim

and more detail about the proposed verification cycle steps needed to make a claim. These steps would include interviewing the Project Specialist on things like how the data was collected and how the growers were engaged. This would also include volume checking if volumes are a part of the claim.

The update from the Verification Committee on the continuous improvement plan deals with the attribution part of the plan. The Committee wanted to make sure the project owner considered the natural resources in a local project area and that they have put in place steps to address them. The committee didn’t want to be too prescriptive on what needed to be included in the continuous improvement plan.

Chisara reviews a couple case studies to see how the verification process could work out in practice. These cases included a late project participant who wants to buy unused byproduct, and then make an impact claim off that. A question was also raised about what kind of impact claims would/could a farmer make. This by extension brings up potential grower claims for the future, a topic that will be addressed longer-term.

***End of January 10th portion of meeting.***

 ***January 11***

**2017 Work Plan**

Rod discusses the development of the 2017 Work Plan. This plan has not been reviewed by staff and is not finalized. The four overarching goals of the 2017 Work Plan are membership, governance, and program development; metric and tool development; program implementation, partnership, and scaling; and communication, outreach, and alignment. The finalized plan will include month times lines for each of the outlined portions. Rod will email out the Work Plan to the Board members, who will then email back comments to Rod. A suggestion is made to asterisk or indicate portions of the work plan that are tied to grants, as those cannot be changed.

Next Steps: Rod will email out the Work Plan to the Board members, who will then email back comments to Rod.

**Business Plan**

Rod leads a conversation on review of the business plan that was approved in June 2015. He starts with an overview of the option selected by the General Assembly, including which responsibilities fall to FTM, which responsibilities fall to FTM members, and which are handled by third parties. He also reviews the revenue/cost model that was developed by Context Network and how FTM has followed this plan. This included the hiring of Paul Hishmeh as Data and Technology Director and Chisara Ehiemere as Business Director. The next step on the list is a farm project support manager, which is the Program Manager position FTM is currently seeking to fill. FTM has migrated from contract services to in-house support through transitioning out of our contract with Keystone (filled primarily by Chisara’s hire) and the eminent expiration of Catherine’s contract, which will be filled by the Program Manager and a future Educational Resource Manager position. The final portion of the need/solution diagram is expanded program reporting capabilities, an ongoing task for FTM.

Rod goes over Associate member licensing fees and how this plays out in the verification process. One example of the non-member/associate member paying for a measurement claim is that Ardent Mills, an associate member, has paid for a Fieldprint Project Participation Claim. This will likely increase in 2017. A comment is made that the reality of getting licensing fees in place is challenging. Rod will also be working with Chisara to determine the true cost of FTM providing these kinds of services to our membership.

**NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant update**

Rod gives background on the Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) that FTM recently undertook. The Environmental Defense Fund had been monitoring available federal grants, and approached Rod about a grant they thought was a good fit for FTM. FTM had a gap in the 2017 budget for funding the updates to the FPP. Rod and staff decided to apply for the CIG after evaluating the opportunity.

The Environmental Defense Fund assisted FTM with applying for the grant. FTM received commitments for $3,000,000 in match funding for the grant (both in-kind and cash match). This goes beyond the $2,000,000 that FTM has applied for from the CIG. The Environmental Defense Fund was very impressed with the response from FTM members. Rod thanks Paul in particular for his help applying for the grant.

The project period for the CIG is June 2017 to May 2020. The key deliverables include updating the Fieldprint Platform, developing refined data management protocols, and expanding use and adoption of the Fieldprint Platform and associated tool (such as the API).

A lot of the in-kind match from members included piloting new tools/programs and scaling. Some commodity groups committed as much as $250,000 for grower engagement with the program. A list of the supporting organizations for matching funds in cash, matching funds in-kind, and letters of support are shown to the Board. Rod informs the Board that FTM will not hear back about the grant until May.

A question is asked about whether there is a lead state for the CIG. Staff clarifies that this is a national level CIG, but they did require FTM to list states involved. The states include Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, and Nebraska. State conservationists in these eight states received a copy of the grant on Monday. Gary comments that the right people at USDA-NRCS know that FTM has applied, but Gary will send some emails to more people to inform them. Gary has looked at the proposal and thinks FTM has done a good job of highlighting projects and alignment. Gary will talk to the state heads and let them know FTM members are available to talk to them if needed or if they have questions. Rod also mentions that FTM has formed a partnership with the Environmental Defense Fund for applying for this grant because of the Environmental Defense Fund’s past success with Conservation Innovation Grants.

**Data and Technology Updates**

Paul gives an update on the data and technology portion of FTM. For data management licensing agreements, one agreement is finalized, and two are pending.

For alfalfa piloting, the pilot coordinated by National Alfalfa and Forage Alliance is underway. The plan is to finalize inputs by the end of January, and report on piloting by February 7th.

Paul also highlights the coordinated API testing. Colorado State University will conduct API performance testing with Agrible/FTM the week of January 16th.

A question comes up on how exactly the API is available- on a home computer, on a tractor, etc. Paul gives what he thinks would be a typical usage. He thinks an API partner would pull the information from the grower from the farm management software and map from there, not necessarily pulling the information directly off the tractor. The data processed from the API gets pushed to FTM, and FTM pushes back the Fieldprint scores.

Paul continues his data and technology updates. The Technology Advisory Council held its initial meeting call in December and discussed the NRCS CIG. Finally, Paul discusses Fieldprint Platform Version 3.0. Now that the CIG grant proposal is complete, the target for the RFP for vendors has been moved to February.

Paul clarifies the role of the Technology Advisory Council and version 3.0 of the Fieldprint Platform. The Technology Advisory Council is not responsible for writing a very detailed and precise RFP, but rather putting out an RFP with the basic needs and working with the selected vendor help fill in the details. There was some concern expressed that the RFP will not be detailed enough or have all the specifications laid out for the potential vendor. However, industry norms are to establish priorities and a timeline within the RFP and then work on the details with the selected vendor.

Next Step: A request is made for the Board to be briefed on the RFP prior to its release.

Allison points out that FTM will need to do a lot of expectation management surrounding version 3.0 of FPP. The timeline for the new version will depend a lot on the outcome and timeline of the CIG funding. A question is raised on what the plan is if the CIG is not granted to FTM. Rod responds that he has started talking with foundations as a backup plan. Overall, funding for the Fieldprint Platform Version 3.0 will likely be more clearly known by May or June.

For FPP version 3.0, there are several key platform improvement areas. This includes: the underlying platform, including architecture, software, database, API, and hosting; agronomic and model results including cropping systems and templates; data quality including quality assurance, quality control and data management; data analytics and reporting including data output, dashboard, and metrics; NRCS model integration including improving inputs and model hosting; and finally, new features including claims/verification, administration, and mapping.

Rod covers some policy considerations for moving forward. There are two main issues so far. The first is vendor bidders for version 3.0 of the FPP. Should FTM members be eligible to bid on version 3.0? What about the current API integrators? Historically, FTM has not limited bidders for other RFPs to only non-members. A Board member suggestions that a decision on this is broader than just the version 3.0 API, but would be applicable to all RFPs put forth by FTM. Ray weighs in that transparency and disclosure would be very important for making sure FTM steers clear of any conflict of interest. He does not believe that members should be excluded.

The second policy discussion is whether FTM should shift toward an open source approach for the Fieldprint Platform. Historically, FTM has taken measures to protect its intellectual property. On the other hand, Rod gives the example of Stewardship Index for Specialty Crops (SISC), which uses an open source approach and has published their metrics for use by the public. A suggestion is made that the Board should better understand the definitions of open source and the pros of such an approach.

Next Steps: Michael Parks, an attorney from Thompson Coburn specializing in IP issues, will create a one pager on an open source approach to intellectual property. This will be distributed to the Board at the March meeting.

**Harmonization Updates**

Rod gives an update on the draft MOU with the SAI Platform, which would establish an equivalency between the programs. This is important for some current FTM members and potential members. This would allow companies to work through the FTM Fieldprint Platform with growers, and then answer a few additional questions on top of the Fieldprint Platform to achieve different levels of the SAI platform (bronze, silver, gold). Allison has been working on the questions, including the language used for the equivalency. The additional questions needed for SAI are mostly social questions about things like farm safety. Growers will only see these questions if a project specifically requires it to meet SAI equivalency. FTM should receive comments from SAI on the MOU this week. A press release on this agreement should go out soon.

A question is asked about whether FTM has run the questions by grower groups for sensitivity sake. Rod answers that the questions were run by Stewart who provided the perspective of a grower. Allison answers that she has run the questions by some University/Extension programs for reactions. Stefani mentions that Unilever will be the first company to use the additional questions, and she will report back on any issues with growers.

A question is raised about what happens if the SAI Platform revises their requirements and how FTM will be notified of this. Rod points out an element of the MOU that requires quarterly check-ins on the MOU, which he can then report out on to the Board. A question is raised on how verification will work with the MOU/equivalency. FTM is creating guidance on this now, and it will be worked out prior to the press release.

Potential MOU with SISC

Rod presents information on the proposed MOU with the Stewardship Index for Specialty Crops. There are two key principles to consider in any arrangement with SISC: what does this mean for growers, and how FTM and SISC can create a common/consistent framework for supply chain sustainability.

Some specific areas for collaborations include: harmonization or alignment of metrics, common technology and data collection solutions, common verification protocols, and alignment in governance between the two organizations. FTM did analysis on how the metrics for FTM and SISC align, and what the differences are. SISC does not have a tool, but are interested in what part SISC could play in Fieldprint Platform Version 3.0. SISC has not done any verification work, and are looking to learn from FTM’s efforts.

Rod thinks an MOU would be a show of good will to explore alignment between SISC and FTM. An MOU would not commit FTM to any specific outcomes.

Draft guidance for TSC KPIs

An update is given on The Sustainability Consortium (TSC). Some case studies that were developed in 2016 to evaluate how Fieldprint data has been used in TSC reporting. What was learned through that process is that although a lot of data is collected, it doesn’t always link to the questions TSC is asking. The next step is developing guidance for responding to TSC’s Key Performance Indicators. This is being developed by FTM and has a target publication of February 2017.

*David moved to pursue the MOU with the Stewardship Index for Specialty Crops. Debbie seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.*

**New Crops**

Allison gives an update on new crops and proposed crops for the Fieldprint Platform. The proposed new crops are alfalfa, corn silage, barley, sugar beets, peanuts, and sorghum. Allison gives a reminder on the process of adding new crops. The process for adding new crops are board approval, creating environmental indicators, developing benchmarks, metrics development, Fieldprint Platform implementation, pilot testing, and then final release. Allison requests that the standard operating procedure for adding new crops be revised at some point in 2017.

Allison let the Board know that alfalfa is close to completion. The National Alfalfa and Forage Alliance has a pilot tool they are able to use for alfalfa. All other crops are on hold until Fieldprint Platform Version 3.0. She is actively working with sugar beets and peanuts to develop data collection questionnaires, which will allow her to begin metric scoping.

Board approval is needed to approve peanuts, corn silage, and barley for the Fieldprint Platform. A question is asked on funding for implementation of some of the new crops. Allison and Rod answer that the American Peanut Council is paying for peanut implementation and Innovation Center for US Dairy will fund corn for sileage as part of their CIG commitment. Sugar beets and barley are being funded by FTM because they are legacy crops that were approved by Field to Market’s Board in 2014. Funding for other new crops haven’t been determined yet.

*Keith N moved to approve peanuts, corn silage, and barley for inclusion in the Fieldprint Platform. Keith A seconded. The motion was passed unanimously.*

**Fieldprint Projects**

Catherine Campbell updates the Board on Fieldprint Projects. Currently, there are 35 registered projects and 25 unregistered projects. Catherine has talked to the project administrators for unregistered projects, and they are all in the process of getting their projects set up. The 2016 annual reporting period will be January to April 2017. There were 12 annual reports filed for 2015 projects. The process of the annual reports is in development. The next call of the Fieldprint Project Administrators Network will be January 18th.

Betsy walks through the member portal project registration process. The entire registration process, including filing process for annual reports, can now take place online. The full project registration directory is available on the member portal, which includes more information than the public facing page on registered projects. Another feature of the new member portal includes the ability to make a measurement claim online. Betsy goes over the new resource and document library, which FTM is in the process of updating. The full list of documents and resources will be available by the end of January.

**Education and Outreach Committee updates**

Catherine gives updates on the Education and Outreach Committee. For Fieldprint Project Design and Implementation subgroup, the final Fieldprint Project best management methodology report is being finalized this month. They are also working on updating the Fieldprint Project manual. Data collection and data management sections are still being worked on here. Finally, they are working on defining and outlining the training modules via webinar/videos or other mediums.

The Fieldprint calculator outputs and supporting materials subgroup is working on Fieldprint Calculator results interpretation based outcomes from Metric Calculation Sensitivity Analysis and Fieldprint Platform Version 3.0 RFP input.

Finally, the Third-Party Training and Services subgroup is working on a request for CCA Sustainability Certification CEU support. Additionally, they are working on case studies regarding correlation between sustainability outcomes and economic impacts. Finally, they are working on the Sustainable Ag Resource Center. This was initiated by the Midwest Row Crop Collaborative (MRCC). FTM would be funded by MRCC for information, training, and resources to help scale up private sector sustainability services. This is for providing those who help growers find the value of sustainability work. MRCC is looking into what the ag retail sector needs for this. This is also worked into the FTM 2017 Work Plan. It will not be limited to MRCC states, but will be national.

**Metric Committee updates**

Allison presents a proposal for a paper from Council on Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST). This proposal was suggested by Todd Peterson of Winfield Solutions. The topic is a review of supply-chain sustainability approaches in the US. The opportunity to highlight data gaps and research needs to support these efforts. It would be written by CAST selected authors. FTM would need to raise $40,000 for publication and launch event costs. It would be published in fall 2017 and could be helpful for policy makers to consider future research needs. Todd has previously done this with the Monarch or Pollinator project at Keystone. Funding for that was raised by different members of that program.

The Science Advisory Council feels it would be valuable to have an independent paper on FTM. Separately, Allison is working with the Science Advisory Council to write a paper on the methodology in 2016 National Indicators Report, which would be published in an independent journal. FTM members who have interest in research could use this paper to communicate more effectively about research gaps.

The Board expressed concern that the proposal is too broad and could pose risks for FTM. A suggestion is made that the scope is narrowed.

Next Steps: Allison is to collect comments from Science Advisory Council and Board on the document as presented, and distribute a list of published CAST documents. A vote on the CAST proposal will happen at the March Board meeting.

 Allison then gives an update on metrics revisions for 2017. Three metrics currently in the planning/method selection/initial documentation phase: soil carbon, water quality, and greenhouse gas methane. The irrigation water use subgroup is currently in the discussion phase, and working toward making a recommendation. Three new subgroups are forming this year: soil erosion, biodiversity, and energy use. A comment is made that as we create subgroups, we could find more and more tweaks that members would like made, which impedes progress. A suggestion is made that the Board consider setting timelines for the subgroups so they don’t drag out the process. Rod suggests giving the subgroups the timeline of the September in-person committee meetings for final recommendations prior to the November General Assembly. Allison clarifies that the review schedule is not set in stone; if something major came up, the subgroup could be brought back together despite the review schedule.

Next Steps: Board to consider setting timelines for Metrics Subgroups to ensure timely progress is made.

A question is asked on if FTM should have an MOU with Cool Farm Tool on soil carbon. Cool Farm Tool is starting to undergo a 3-year update on soil carbon, so this may be a good time to align with them.

Next Steps: Staff to investigate the possibility of an MOU with Cool Farm Tool. Allison to make recommendation to the BOD about this in March.

Water quality metric report

Allison updates the Board on the metric revision for Water Quality. In 2016, FTM hired LimnoTech to complete an initial study on revisions. This included a SWAT model code modifications for field level simulation. The calibration for these studies sites were cotton in Alabama, rice in Mississippi, corn/soy in Iowa, and corn/soy in Ohio. FTM wants to offer a tool that covers the entire US, so the four study sites are somewhat limiting. The literature review for these studies only identified 11 study sites with sufficient field measurements to calibrate a metric of the score that meeting FTM requirements. These sites range in size. It is likely that additional information could be acquired from non-peer viewed literature sources. It is estimated that >200 calibrations would be required for geographic/crop system scope for full representation of FTM. This would be a significant investment of time and finances.

This emerging literature highlights limitations of all existing models of Phosphorous loss from agriculture (including SWAT). This gives Allison pause. There is significant uncertainty in the scientific community that requires more fundamental research.

The next steps under consideration include the Metrics Committee inviting NRCS to present an update on the water quality tool being deployed through the Resource Stewardship Evaluation Tool – called the STEP tool (they are not using APEX). Evaluating whether this approach should be adopted to replace WQI as an interim solution will take place. Marty Adkins of NRCS will help facilitate a webinar on this. FTM’s end goal is a quantitative method.

Another proposed idea includes conducting a targeted metric development and testing effort for the Upper Mississippi corn-soybean system. This area has the best data availability where the primary resource concern is nitrogen. This would provide a better sense of the level of effort required and key considerations for quantitative metric development. This would be an additional project with LimnoTech.

A third proposed idea is convening a group of scientific experts to assist in documenting the research and model development efforts needed to achieve the FTM vision of a quantitative metric.

Allison’s plan going forward is first to invite NRCS to present an update on STEP, and have the group evaluate it. The other two proposals are more down the road, but important. FTM has potential resources the second two proposals from grant funding. The targeted metric development and testing effort could be paid for by a grant. The convening of a group of experts is a matter of paying for travel and hosting a meeting. A suggestion is made is keep thinking about the cost/time/likelihood of a quantitative metric vs. a qualitative method in the near to medium range.

N2O revisions

For Nitrous Oxide, an initial proposal was received at the end of June by IPNI. The N20 subgroup and the full Metrics committee were asked to give comments. Review comments were submitted by 2 peer reviewers and 6 member organizations. A revision was submitted mid-December and it is currently in the process of re-evaluating. The next steps are testing the concept with current Fieldprint Platform users to see how their scores would be affected. Then, the Metrics and GHG Subgroup will evaluate the materials before moving on to public comment and Board approval.

The proposed change adjusts the current FTM approach. The current approach is IPCC Tier 1. The new approach has two steps: each user would have a specific emissions multiple based on crop, soil texture, and location (for climate conditions). The user would be asked to describe their fertilizer management in greater detail and be categorized as basic, intermediate or advanced (for corn, soy or wheat systems only). The metric outcome would be influenced by soil and climate; the user could achieve improvement through changes in fertilizer management.

The scientific basis of this involved the Science Advisory Council, meta-analysis of research from 4R, simulation modeling, and extensive literature discuss.

Allison is preparing a demo with Catherine in the Fieldprint Platform. This demo is an irrigated corn/soybean farm in the north. Allison goes over some details from the demo farm, including soil texture. She then gives the GHG on the basic, intermediate, or advanced levels.

Prior to asking the Board to vote on N20 revisions, the Board will be provided with a variety of documents. Technical documentation, review comments, examples of impacts on current users, draft plan for implementation, recommendation for corps not included in suites of practices, public comments, and the Metrics Committee recommendation. This is targeted for the May Board call.

Next Steps: Allison to put documentation on Board section of Member Portal regarding the N2O revision. The Board will vote on the revision at the May Board meeting.

**Awards and Recognition Committee updates**

Betsy gives the update on the Awards and Recognition Committee. A new farmer spotlight will be launched this week, focused on Dave and Kevin Beske, two brothers farming in Wisconsin. The nomination period for farmer spotlights is now open. Nominations will be taken until February 28th. Evaluation and selection of the next farmer spotlights will happen in March/April. An announcement of the selected farmers will happen at the June Plenary and General Assembly. Spotlights will be either weekly or biweekly, depending on how many farmers are selected. Betsy asks the Board for feedback on the nomination process. Nomination forms are available on the website.

For the awards program, open nomination period is July and August. Judging will be done by a panel of FTM members (and potential outside experts) in September/October. Announcements on winners will happen at the November General Assembly. The proposed award categories are Farmer of the Year and Outstanding Partnership/Collaboration. The Committee is working on the nomination forms for these categories now.

Farmer Spotlights

**Upcoming Meetings**

Two changes have been made for the 2017 calendar. The in-person standing committee meetings in April will now be held the week of April 3. The October BOD meeting has been changed to October 11-12. A proposal to host an additional Board call prior to the March Board meeting is offered.

A suggestion to move the November SAS and general Assembly so it does not conflict with fertilizer meetings. The suggestion will be taken to the SAS planning committee.

Next Step: Staff to schedule additional, shorter Board calls to discuss Verification prior to the March Board meeting.

**Adjourn**