



Field to Market®

PROCESS-BASED STANDARD FOR ACCELERATING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN AGRICULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

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FIELD TO MARKET VISION, MISSION, & GOALS

Our Vision: To harness the collective action of the value chain to support resilient ecosystems and enhance farmer livelihoods.

Our Mission: To meet the agricultural challenge of the 21st century by providing collaborative leadership that is transparent; grounded in science; focused on outcomes; open to the full range of technology choices; and committed to creating opportunities across the agricultural supply chain for continuous improvements in productivity, profitability, and environmental outcomes.

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 recognize that a critical component of any sustainability goal is to enhance farmer livelihoods. Field to Market will convene diverse stakeholders to support multi-sector collaboration, while providing useful measurement tools and resources for growers and the value chain that track and create opportunities for continuous improvement. Our efforts are guided by the following goals:

- **Energy Use** - Sustained improvement in energy use efficiency from U.S. crop production
- **Greenhouse Gases** - Sustained reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from U.S. cropland per unit of output, and sustained contribution to addressing the overall greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from agriculture, recognizing the need to meet future crop production demands.
- **Irrigation Water Use** - Sustained contribution to solving regional water scarcity problems through continual improvement in irrigation water use efficiency and conservation.
- **Land Use** - Sustained improvement of land use efficiency by increasing productivity on U.S. cropland, conserving native habitat, and enhancing landscape quality.
- **Soil Conservation** - Sustained reduction in soil erosion to tolerable levels or below on all U.S. cropland.
- **Water Quality** - Sustained contribution to solving regional water quality problems as evidenced by reductions in sediment, phosphorus, nitrogen, and pesticide loads from U.S. cropland.

1.0 SCOPE

- 1.0.1 The Principles & Requirements set out in this Process-Based Standard (Standard) are applicable to all Field to Market Project Administrators and

Continuous Improvement Projects. It also represents the Requirements against which projects can pursue both sustainability claims and verification, if desired.

- 1.0.2 The Requirements shall be applied as per the relevant sections contained within this document and those associated or referenced.
- 1.0.3 As an organization committed to both advancing continuous improvement in agriculture and within our programmatic approach, Field to Market will pilot this Standard with members for a one-year period, with one member comment period, before engaging external stakeholders in a public comment period.
- 1.0.4 Once the Standard is finalized, Field to Market may issue minor updates and changes from time to time, providing clarifications or corrections to the Requirements. These shall be published to the Field to Market website and shall be applicable as per the date specifically stated for each update. Field to Market shall provide notice of all such changes and the dates for implementation and applicability on its website. Any substantive changes will go through member and public comment periods.
- 1.0.5 Stakeholders may submit suggested updates, edits, changes or additions at any time to Field to Market by submission to standard@fieldtomarket.org. Such requests shall be considered as per the Field to Market Standards Setting Requirements. Field to Market reserves the right to accept or reject such submissions at its own discretion.

2.0 TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

API: Application Programming Interface which connects eight sustainability metrics and associated algorithms from the Fieldprint Platform directly to farm management software solutions, allowing growers to assess the environmental performance of their management practices against regional, state and national benchmarks for key sustainability indicators. It is relevant for projects that work with a Qualified Data Management Partner to collect and store their data.

Assurance Principles: Field to Market's Assurance Principles provide a framework for Field to Market members for the selection and provision of different levels of assurance in meeting Field to Market standards.

Baseline: A measurement representing the starting point of a project from which improvement and achievements of goals will be measured. In an Incubation Project this can be the number of project participants that have adopted a certain practice. In an Insight Project this is the first year of Fieldprint Analysis. In an Innovation Project, this is the average of three years of Fieldprint Analysis for the same grower population.

Claims: Statements or assertions of Field to Market participation or membership, or improvements in practices or environmental outcomes related to Field to Market Continuous Improvement Projects.

Continuous Improvement Plan: A Project-based plan for improvement in environmental outcomes over time that includes goals and objectives relevant to addressing the identified natural resource concern and a grower engagement plan that considers outreach, engagement, support and retention over the length of the project.

Credible Project Attribute(s) Claim: A claim that is related to the uptake of a specific practice or intervention in the context of project that has a public-facing Continuous Improvement Plan.

Fieldprint® Platform: A pioneering assessment framework that empowers brands, retailers, suppliers, and growers at every stage in their sustainability journey, to measure the environmental impacts of commodity crop production and identify opportunities for continuous improvement. It encompasses the suite of technologies available to Field to Market growers and members.

Impact Claim: A claim based on the comparison of metrics within the Fieldprint Platform related to a project. Quantifies actual sustained improvements or reductions against Field to Market's outcomes-based metrics. This type of claim requires a minimum of five years of recorded data and a baseline must be established to evaluate impact of continuous improvement strategies by calculating a three-year average of sustainability performance from the grower population engaged across that same time period. The data utilized to establish the baseline must be drawn from the same set of growers over time, such that the data collected for the baseline and the data collected in subsequent years to evaluate impact, reflects the same growers, or growers that are statistically similar enough to enable quantification of change over time. An example of the resulting impact that could be claimed is: Company ABC buys corn from growers who have reduced their water usage by 10% over the last five years.

Measurement Claim: A claim that communicates progress in engaging growers and acreage in measuring continuous improvement in Years One to Four of a Continuous Improvement Project. This type of claim documents intent to contribute sustained improvements or reductions against Field to Market's outcomes-based metrics and demonstrates a one-year snapshot of aggregate environmental outcomes from the project.

Metrics: The Fieldprint Platform provides a Fieldprint Analysis which estimates field level performance on sustainability indicators. Continuous Improvement Plans state which of these metrics to focus on, and impact claims may include directional improvement in these areas where the data supports these changes. These indicators are:

- Biodiversity
- Energy Use

- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Irrigation Water Use
- Land Use
- Soil Carbon
- Soil Conservation
- Water Quality

Project Administrator: The Project lead who is responsible for overseeing project administration, quality control and communications with participating growers and all sponsors and partners.

Project Participation Claim: A statement or assertion of participation in a Field to Market Project by a Field to Market member organization or licensee, which may also include the number of acres and growers enrolled in the project.

Project Directory: A public-facing listing of Field to Market continuous improvement projects including continuous improvement plans and status.

Project Sponsor: The principle Project investor that shapes the direction of the Project and is responsible for ensuring compliance with requirements.

Project Partner: A party who has contributed to a Project or has been contracted to provide service to a Project and is officially listed in Project documentation.

Project Status: Public-facing listing of the status of Field to Market continuous improvement projects as Prospective, Active, Suspended, Terminated or Sunset.

Project Suspension: Status for projects that have not submitted annual reports, required supporting documentation or fulfilled other requirements. This status designation is determined by the Field to Market Board of Directors at staff recommendation.

Project Termination: Status for projects that end before fulfilling the objectives and/or timeframes elaborated in the Continuous Improvement Plan.

Qualified Data Management Partner (QDMP): Farm-management software solution providers that have been approved by Field to Market and whose software solutions connect to all of Field to Market's sustainability metrics and associated algorithms from the Fieldprint Platform via an Application Programming Interface (API). A list of currently available QDMPs can be found along with additional information about the Platform [here](#).

Sunset: The term used for projects that have successfully completed their stated continuous improvement goal(s) and objectives.

FIELD TO MARKET'S PROCESS FOR ACCELERATING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT



Phase Zero - Define Project Intent & Scope

- Select Project Pathway
- Define Project Boundaries
- Identify Relevant Natural Resource Concern
- Conduct Stakeholder Mapping



Phase One - Develop Continuous Improvement Plan

- Register as Prospective Project (Optional)
- Confirm Participants
- Develop Continuous Improvement Plan
- Register as Active Project



Phase Two - Implement & Evaluate Progress

- Implement continuous improvement strategies
- Track and report progress annually
- Share annual progress reports on Project Directory
- Practice adaptive management



Phase Three - Document Project-Level Improvements

- Conduct project-level evaluation
- Share results on Project Directory



Phase Four – Demonstrate Project-Level Sustainability Impact

OPTIONAL

- Establish baseline from three years of data
- Evaluate results from five years of data against baseline to demonstrate impact
- Utilize Impact Claims Protocol to verify results

3.1 Continuous Improvement Accelerator

Field to Market's Continuous Improvement Accelerator harnesses the power of collaboration and locally-led conservation solutions to deliver sustainable outcomes for agriculture, people and the planet.

The hallmark of the Accelerator's approach lies in a process-based approach to advancing continuous improvement (*Figure 1*), which is grounded in a foundation that delivers solutions to global sustainable development priorities while also addressing local natural resource concerns.

By offering three unique continuous improvement project pathways, the Accelerator meets farmers and the value chain wherever they are on their sustainability journey. From creating building blocks for farmers to get started on their journey, to improving transparency by benchmarking sustainability performance, or supporting innovative incentive programs to accelerate adoption of more sustainable practices, our flexible approach to project design creates shared value and improves environmental outcomes, unlocking lasting impact.

The Accelerator supports three pathways to advance sustainable agriculture:

- **INCUBATION** – Creates enabling conditions by engaging with farmers on the connection between practices and at least one of the sustainability outcomes targeted in Field to Market's program
- **INSIGHT** – Offers sustainability insights for farmers and transparency for value chain partners through measurement using the Fieldprint Platform, either through the online calculator or approved software (API)
- **INNOVATION** - Provides tangible support for farmer in accelerating adoption of practices that deliver improved sustainability outcomes consistent with the published goals of the Project

These projects utilize the power of voluntary, and often market-driven, solutions to incentivize improved environmental outcomes and enhance farmer livelihoods. By following a standardized and validated approach, these project pathways can leverage the collective action of the value chain to support resilient ecosystems and enhance farmer livelihoods.

3.2 Eligibility Requirements

The following elements are requirements for all projects registered in the Continuous Improvement Accelerator:

- **Multi-stakeholder Participation** - A Continuous Improvement Project leverages collaboration among stakeholders within the food and agricultural value chain, such as growers; grower cooperatives; agricultural retailers; grain aggregators; apparel, beverage or food manufacturers, retailers, etc., to foster adoption of conservation practices and improvements in environmental outcomes.

Specifically, a continuous improvement project must include active participation by stakeholders within the agricultural value chain. Other important participants may include government, academia, and civil society. Participation means contributing financial or in-kind support to the project and/or working on activities in the continuous improvement plan.

- **Public Commitment** - Participants must publicly commit to support growers in pursuing opportunities for continuous improvement through providing direct or in-kind investments in the project
- **Objectives** - A continuous improvement project must define the near-term scope of the project with a set of timebound objectives and clearly establish the baseline(s) against which the project will evaluate success.
- **Continuous Improvement Plan** – A continuous improvement project must develop and implement a Continuous Improvement Plan designed to achieve the project's objectives and maximize opportunities to support growers in pursuing continuous improvement that addresses pressing local natural resource concerns and global sustainable development priorities. The Continuous Improvement Plan and deadlines must be made publicly available.
- **Progress Tracking and Reporting** – A continuous improvement project must annually track progress toward the objectives in the Continuous Improvement Plan and report progress and any related planned course corrections publicly. All continuous improvement projects are expected to make progress toward their stated objectives over time.

3.3 Process Requirements

3.3.1 Phase Zero: Project Intent & Scope

The initiating phase in Field to Market's process for accelerating continuous improvement is to identify the scope and intent of the project

3.3.1.1 *Project Intent*

Each project must identify the intent of the project by selecting a project pathway:

- **INCUBATION:** Create enabling conditions to engage farmers in the building blocks of sustainable agriculture;
- **INSIGHT:** Understand a baseline of existing sustainability performance while helping farmers identify opportunities for improvement; or
- **INNOVATION:** Collaborate with partners in your value chain to support farmers in improving environmental outcomes

3.3.1.2 *Project Scoping*

Project scoping is intended to test ideas, using informal discussions and outreach to refine and advance them into a broadly outlined narrative of a potential project.

Through the scoping process the following components must be established:

- Determine the scope of the project by identifying the geographic boundaries of the project as specifically as possible. While state is required, projects are encouraged to examine boundaries at a sub-state level, either grouping at crop reporting districts, watersheds or supply sheds.
- Identify the priority crops that the project will focus on and any additional crops that may be grown in rotation. While projects may address other crops under rotation, there must be a focus on at least one of the crops within Field to Market's program. The current crops that are included are alfalfa, barley, corn, corn silage, cotton, peanuts, rice, sorghum, soybeans, sugar beets and wheat.

For projects that are interested in sampling, consult [Field to Market's Sampling Guidance](#) to determine if sampling can be utilized for your project.

3.3.1.3 *Natural Resource Concern Identification*

Each continuous improvement project must identify at least one natural resource concern that the project's continuous improvement objectives will address relevant to pressing conservation priorities in the project region and/or global sustainable development priorities. Projects must consult and reference credible resources to determine local relevance. Credible resources are defined as those organizations and individuals that have studied the region and have prioritized natural resource concerns. These may include the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service Critical Conservation Area Priority Resource Concerns, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, University Extension, conservation NGOs and Certified Crop Advisors with Sustainability Specialization.

Once the natural resource is identified, projects must begin outlining the following:

- Specific sustainability challenges targeted
- Goals and intended benefits or outcomes
- Approximate timeline for completion of project objectives

3.3.1.4 *Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement*

Projects must name project partners and include them in the registration. Engaging potential stakeholders early in the process of project development is fundamental to a project's success. Identifying potential project sponsors, partners and methods to engage potential participating farmers are all essential components of the stakeholder mapping process.

3.3.2 Phase One: Project Design & Launch

The first phase in Field to Market's process for accelerating continuous improvement is the design and development of the project, which is organized in five steps:

3.3.2.1 Eligibility to Register as Prospective Project

Recognizing that effective project design and development including robust stakeholder engagement and project scoping takes time, all continuous improvement projects are eligible to register as a Prospective Project after completing Phase Zero, where the project has completed defining its intent and scope. Prospective Projects may be listed for 12 months. They will be removed from the Project Directory if the project has not completed Phase One by the end of 12 months by completing design and publicly launching the project. The key requirements for Prospective Project Registration include identifying:

- Project Pathway
- Project Boundaries
- Primary Crop(s) Addressed
- Rotational Crops Engaged
- Relevant Natural Resource Concern(s)
- Target Sustainability Metric(s)
- Project Sponsor's Contact Information

3.3.2.2 Confirmation of Project Participants

Projects participants must commit to support growers in pursuing opportunities for continuous improvement through providing direct or in-kind investments in the project in order to be reflected in the participant list on the public-facing Project Directory.

3.3.2.3 Participant Planning and Coordination

During this phase, the Project Sponsor must engage with project participants to jointly develop the necessary components to develop the Project Registration and Continuous Improvement Plan by addressing the following questions:

- Identify what grower engagement strategies will be utilized over the course of the project, considering grower outreach, engagement, support and retention
- Develop the continuous improvement goal(s) the project will address and identify what timebound, measurable objectives the project will use to deliver the overarching continuous improvement goal
- Establish a baseline, against which progress and success will be evaluated (*e.g., Baseline - 15% of enrolled growers have nutrient*

management plans; Project Objective - Nutrient management plans will be developed for 100% of enrolled growers by the end of Year 2).

- Outline the project timeline and target dates for associated milestones or intended project outcomes
- Determine the resource and budget needs by preparing an estimated budget for the project
- Identify methods the project will utilize to help participating growers advance their continuous improvement journey through providing a feedback mechanism and/or tangible support. Examples include, but are not limited to, identifying conservation delivery solutions for farmers (e.g., conservation plans; soil moisture sensors; etc.); peer to peer comparison at annual grower workshop; and/or reports of participants results compared to peer-set.

3.3.2.4 *Development of Continuous Improvement Plan*

Developing a Continuous Improvement Plan for submission at the time of registration ensures that projects are designed to be responsive to relevant natural resource concerns. Key requirements that must be addressed in the Continuous Improvement Plan include:

- **Timebound Continuous Improvement Objectives**

Given the Field to Market requirements for minimum project lengths, each project must define objectives by including specific dates for completion.

Projects must consider what suite of locally relevant conservation practices can contribute solutions to pressing natural resource concerns in the region before developing supporting continuous improvement strategies.

- **Mechanisms for Evaluating Continuous Improvement**

Each project must develop a baseline for each continuous improvement objective that will be utilized to evaluate what progress has been achieved on an annual basis.

Each Project Pathway is required to develop baselines from which to evaluate progress against the project's stated continuous improvement objectives.

- **Grower Engagement & Retention Strategies**

Projects must consider and document the strategies and actions that they will take to recruit and retain growers in the project.

Projects are required to report on progress against their planned activities in annual reports, and will also be able to adjust over time, if needed, to try new strategies or change existing ones. Projects will need to show evidence of steps taken against their plans (e.g., *kick-off meetings, intake forms, training plans, etc.*). *Projects that intend to pursue Impact Claims should pay particular attention to grower retention strategies as data will need to be collected from either the same set of growers or statistically similar growers, over a period of a minimum of five years.*

- **Acreage Enrollment Methodology** (*Required for Insight and Innovation Projects Only*)

Insight and Innovation Projects must define and report the acreage enrollment methodology that is used.

Field to Market requires that each grower enter data into the Fieldprint Platform for a minimum of 10% of the acres that they wish to enroll in a project for a specific crop. Field to Market recognizes that higher percentages lead to more exact results and encourages projects to enter data for a larger percent of acreage where feasible. Transparency in the overall enrollment approach is required as it conveys the methodology applied at the field level in data collection.

Projects that are not entering data for 100% of the enrolled acreage must define in their registration how they are ensuring that the acreage for which data is being entered are representative of the enrolled acreage.

3.3.2.5 *Submission of Full Project Registration*

Field to Market is committed to transparency, consistency and accuracy in how projects develop and evaluate progress against continuous improvement goal(s) and objectives. As a result, all projects must complete a registration process including submission of supporting documentation that will be made publicly available, such as the Continuous Improvement Plan. To understand the complete requirements, see the [Project Registration and Continuous Improvement Plan Planning Template](#).

3.3.4 **Phase Two: Project Implementation**

The second phase in Field to Market's process for accelerating continuous improvement is the implementation of the strategies and activities to deliver against the objectives identified in the Continuous Improvement Plan. There are three critical steps in this phase:

3.3.4.1 Implement Continuous Improvement Strategies and Activities

Projects must implement strategies and activities to deliver against the measurable, timebound objectives outlined in their Continuous Improvement Plan.

3.3.4.2 Track and Report Progress Annually

Projects must track and report progress annually against the Continuous Improvement Plan, submitting an Annual Report by April 30 for each year the project is active. When submitting the Annual Report, each project must define and publicly communicate their level of verification (first-party, second-party or third-party) for the project results.

Transparency in the level of verification used by the project conveys the associated process utilized to address the project's risk. Field to Market's Assurance Principles outline best practices for projects in evaluating the appropriate level of risk a project may assume given their continuous improvement goal(s) and desired outcomes.

All Annual Reports will become visible on the public-facing Project Directory after they have been reviewed and approved by Field to Market staff. Reviewers will approve annual reports based on completeness, comparison with what was previously reported, and the provision of supporting documentation where relevant. For reporting requirements, please see the [ANNUAL REPORT TEMPLATE](#).

In addition, the Project Administrator must review and report observations and outcomes based on established goal(s) and objectives with participating growers and partners at least once a year.

3.3.4.3 Adaptive Management

Projects must adapt their approach to advancing continuous improvement if the annual review highlights the identified strategies and activities did not deliver progress against the measurable, timebound objective(s).

Field to Market recognizes that the implementation phase has many interdependencies, some which can be planned for and others that will remain outside the direct control of the Project Administrator, Partners and participating farmers. When substantive changes to the Continuous Improvement Plan are required, Projects must report these to Field to Market through a Project Amendment form, which will also be reflected on the project's public listing on the Project Directory.

3.3.5 Phase Three: Document Improvements

The third phase in Field to Market's process for accelerating continuous improvement is documenting how the project has influenced advancements in continuous improvement as a result of the implemented strategies and activities over the lifespan of the project. There are two steps relevant to all project types:

3.3.5.1 Conduct Project Level Evaluation

By combining annual assessments into an overall project evaluation, projects must document and demonstrate what improvements have occurred as a result of their engagement.

3.3.5.2 Publicly Share Final Project Results

In recognition that all Project Pathways are intended to support a farmer's journey of continuous improvement, moving from knowledge to analysis to action, each project must summarize and publicly share the final results to benefit the broader community working to advance sustainable agriculture.

While this evaluation may look different depending upon the project pathway selected, each project is required to assess how their selected strategies supported farmers in pursuing continuous improvement in the targeted sustainability outcome(s) and address the relevant natural resource concern(s).

For an Incubation Project, the project-level evaluation might include reporting out on increased adoption of identified conservation practices against the established baseline. For an Insight Project, the evaluation might include the establishment of an Baseline against which improvements in environmental outcomes could be quantified through transitioning to an Innovation Project. For an Innovation Project, the evaluation might assess the efficacy of value-added incentives in driving accelerated practice adoption if the project does not wish to advance to Phase Four (Demonstrate Impact in Sustainability Outcomes).

At a minimum, each project is required to share their progress in achieving their continuous improvement objectives, analyzing what strategies and activities were successful in helping farmers pursue continuous improvement and any lessons learned that may benefit the broader community working to address similar natural resource concerns.

3.3.6 Phase Four: Demonstrate Impact in Sustainability Outcomes (OPTIONAL)

The final phase in Field to Market's process for continuous improvement, which only Innovation Projects are eligible to achieve and is therefore optional, is demonstrating the impact of continuous improvement strategies and activities on improving sustainability outcomes through a three-step process:

3.3.6.1 *Establish a Baseline*

The project must have previously established an appropriate baseline during the initial phases of the Project, utilizing Field to Market's methodology for Impact Claims which creates a three-year average of sustainability performance from the grower population engaged across that same time period. Projects must note that in order to qualify as a baseline for an Impact Claim, the Project must engage the same set of growers over time, such that the data collected as a baseline, and in subsequent years to evaluate impact, reflects the same growers, or growers that are statistically similar enough, to enable quantification of change over time. For projects that plan to grow over time, they should seek to recruit new growers with similar characteristics and needs of growers currently participating in the project.

An Insight Project may wish to transition to an Innovation Project to leverage three years of data collected to establish this baseline, enabling the project to pursue an Impact Claim upon completion of two years of direct support or incentives offered to the same grower population.

3.3.6.2 *Collect Data & Analyze Impact*

After establishing the baseline, the project must collect at least two additional years of data from the same grower population to measure the impact of supporting farmers in accelerating practice adoption through the use of value-added incentives. By analyzing the results of two years of value-added support beyond the baseline, projects are eligible to make an Impact Claim.

3.3.6.3 *Demonstrate Impact*

Utilizing the outcomes-based sustainability metrics of Field to Market's Fieldprint Platform and Impact Claims Protocol, projects are eligible to make an Impact Claim if the project data collected supports quantified improvements over time.

Third-party verification is required to assess the associated data and underlying process the project has employed before an Impact Claim can be shared publicly. The verification findings and aggregated project results will be accessible in the project's listing on the public-facing directory. In addition, any Innovation Project that has completed this assessment and successfully made an Impact Claim will receive an Impact Verified listing on the public-facing Project Directory.

3.4 Project Pathway Specific Requirements

All Field to Market Projects are designed to meet growers and the value chain where they are in their sustainability journey and shift the entire performance curve of sustainable agriculture forward. This approach creates opportunities for all growers, transforming sustainable agriculture from a niche solution for a select group of farmers to a program that is relevant to all growers. There are three Project Pathways that approach these universal principles differently, allowing flexibility based on desired goals and outcomes.

3.4.1 Incubation Project

All Incubation Projects are designed to create enabling conditions by engaging with farmers on the connection between agronomic practices and at least one sustainability indicator. The pathway specific requirements for Incubation Projects to implement the phases in Field to Market's Continuous Improvement Process are as follows:

PHASE ONE

- *Projects must target improvement in at least one of Field to Market's eight sustainability indicators.*
- *Projects' continuous improvement strategies and activities must focus on providing participating farmers with a lasting, tangible resource to pursue opportunities for continuous improvement. A tangible resource may include, but is not limited to, improved management solutions like conservation plans, nutrient management plans or irrigation management plans or improved conservation delivery solutions such as variable rate technology or soil grid mapping.*

PHASE TWO

- *Projects must engage with growers in assessing how their management practices impact the targeted sustainability outcome for a minimum of one year.*

PHASE THREE

- *Projects must evaluate how their engagement with farmers supports farmers in pursuing improvement in the targeted sustainability outcome by comparing results against established project baseline(s).*
- *Upon project completion, each project must publicly share a project level evaluation demonstrating how the project has supported farmers in pursuing continuous improvement, such as reporting out on the percentage increase of grower population now equipped with new management solutions or percentage increase of grower population adopting conservation delivery solutions and/or identified conservation practices compared to project baseline(s).*

3.4.2 Insight Project

All Insight Projects are designed to offer farmers actionable sustainability insights and provide the value chain with greater transparency on sustainability performance through measurement. The pathway specific requirements for Insight Projects to implement the phases in Field to Market's Continuous Improvement Process are as follows:

PHASE ONE

- *Projects must target improvement in at least one of Field to Market's sustainability indicators while providing measurement across all eight outcomes through the Fieldprint Platform.*
- *Projects' continuous improvement strategies and activities must focus on utilizing the sustainability metrics of the Fieldprint Platform to help growers measure and assess how their management practices impact different sustainability outcomes for a minimum of one year.*

PHASE TWO

- *To pursue continuous improvement, projects must utilize at least one year of data collection to set a baseline against which to evaluate how their continuous improvement strategies and activities support improvement in the targeted sustainability outcome.*
- *Projects must offer actionable sustainability insights to participating growers on an annual basis, delivering knowledge and analysis that can be used to support improved sustainability outcomes for the cropping system.*
- *For projects supporting the value chain in achieving greater transparency on sustainability performance, projects must provide aggregate results for all Field to Market sustainability metrics to project sponsors and partners on an annual basis.*

PHASE THREE

- *Projects must evaluate how their engagement with farmers supports farmers in pursuing improvement in the targeted sustainability outcome by comparing results against project baseline(s).*
- *Upon project completion, each project must publicly share a project level evaluation demonstrating how the project has supported farmers in pursuing continuous improvement, such as:*
 - *Establishment of a baseline against which improvements in environmental outcomes could be quantified through transitioning to an Innovation Project; or*
 - *Percentage increase of grower population adopting conservation delivery solutions and/or identified conservation practices compared to project baseline(s).*

3.4.3 Innovation Project

All Innovation Projects are designed to provide tangible support for farmers in accelerating adoption of practices that deliver improved sustainability outcomes consistent with the published goals of the Project. The pathway specific requirements for Innovation Projects to implement the phases in Field to Market's Continuous Improvement Process are as follows:

PHASE ONE

- *Projects must target improvement in at least one of Field to Market's sustainability indicators while providing measurement across all eight outcomes through the Fieldprint Platform.*

- *Projects must identify at least one locally relevant conservation practice for the crop that addresses the identified natural resource concern, although a systems approach is highly recommended, ensuring that trade-offs between agronomic practices and sustainability indicator are understood and appropriately managed.*
- *Projects must outline in their Continuous Improvement Plan what tangible support (i.e., technical assistance, cost-share programs, etc.) the project will utilize to assist growers in pursuing increased adoption of locally relevant conservation practices to deliver improved sustainability outcomes. Unlike other project pathways, the provision of this information is an explicit requirement for Innovation Projects.*
- *Projects' continuous improvement strategies and activities must focus on utilizing the sustainability metrics of the Fieldprint Platform to support growers in assessing how changes in management practices over time can deliver continuous improvement in sustainability outcomes.*

PHASE TWO

- *Projects must engage with growers for a minimum of five years. This can be achieved by establishing a new project with a minimum five-year duration or by adding two years to an existing Insight Project after establishing a three-year baseline.*
- *Projects must offer tangible support each year to assist farmers in pursuing increased adoption of practices to deliver improved sustainability outcomes.*
- *Projects must offer actionable sustainability insights to participating growers on an annual basis, delivering knowledge and analysis that can be used to support improved sustainability outcomes for the cropping system.*
- *Projects must report what strategies and activities have been implemented to deliver progress in meeting continuous improvement objectives outlined in the Continuous Improvement Plan to make claims on credible project attributes (e.g., percentage increase in conservation practice adoption to deliver improved sustainability outcome(s) and address identified natural resource concern).*

PHASE THREE

- *Projects must evaluate how their engagement with farmers supports farmers in pursuing improvement in the targeted sustainability outcome by comparing results against project baseline(s).*
- *Given the longer-term nature of Innovation Projects, in addition to evaluating performance against project baseline(s), projects should also evaluate:*
 - *Grower retention – Is the project successful at retaining growers? What actions may need to be taken to improve retention?*
 - *Improvement trends - While metric results are annual snapshots, these results should be evaluated over time for any emerging patterns and learning that can be derived, even in cases where a project does not anticipate filing an Impact Claim.*
- *If the project chooses to sunset after Phase Three, each project must publicly share a project level evaluation demonstrating how the project has supported farmers in pursuing continuous improvement, such as assessing the efficacy of the Project's strategy for driving accelerated practice adoption.*

PHASE FOUR (Optional)

- *Projects may pursue an Impact Claim by establishing a baseline and collecting two years of additional data utilizing the sustainability metrics of the Fieldprint Platform to analyze the impact of the selected value-added incentives and continuous improvement strategies utilized to drive improvements in targeted sustainability outcomes.*
- *While not required, this phase enables Innovation Projects to go beyond documenting accelerated practice adoption to analyzing quantified improvements in sustainability outcomes over time.*
- *Third-party verification is required to assess the associated data and underlying process the project has employed before an Impact Claim can be shared publicly. The verification findings and aggregated project results will be accessible in the project's listing on the public-facing directory.*
- *Projects are eligible to make an Impact Claim if the project data collected when compared to the baseline supports quantified improvements over time.*
- *Any Innovation Project that has completed this assessment and successfully makes an Impact Claim will receive the Impact Verified status on the public-facing Project Directory.*

3.0 COMMUNICATIONS & CLAIMS

4.1 Annual Review

By April 30 of each year a project is active, it is required to report progress against the stated objectives in the project's published Continuous Improvement Plan. The annual report must be made public on Field to Market's Project Directory as progress tracking and reporting is a key requirement to maintain active project status. Because transparency underpins Field to Market's approach to accelerating continuous improvement, each project must also communicate the level of verification (first-party or self-reporting, second-party or third-party) utilized to validate the results reported on Field to Market's Project Directory. Field to Market encourages credible communication in reporting annual progress and project results and outlines best practices projects should follow in Field to Market's Assurance Principles.

4.2 Project Review

4.2.1 Project Evaluation

Upon completion, each project is required to conduct a project-level evaluation of the results achieved against the goal(s) and objectives in the project's published Continuous Improvement Plan and make a summary of this project-level evaluation public on Field to Market's public-facing Project Directory.

4.2.2 Sunsetting Projects

When a project reports that it is complete and meets all reporting requirements, Field to Market will move the project to the Sunset section of the public-facing

Project Directory. Sunset projects will remain on the public-facing Project Directory indefinitely. Field to Market will not continue to review projects' progress once marked as Sunset on the project directory.

4.3 Claims Eligibility

In addition to publicly reporting progress against the stated objectives in a project's Continuous Improvement Plan in Field to Market's Project Directory, projects are eligible to make the following claims:

- **Project Participation Claims** (*i.e., number of growers and acres, which is now enabled through annual project reporting and communicated publicly on Project Directory*)
- **Adoption Claims** (*i.e., practice or technology adoption consistent with continuous improvement goal(s) and objectives which is now enabled through annual project reporting and communicated publicly on the Project Directory*)
- **Measurement Claims** (*e.g., aggregate metric outcomes for one year*)
- **Impact Claims** (*i.e., quantified change over time in a metric outcome over a minimum of five years*)

Field to Market encourages its members to pursue evidence-based communication. To make it simple for members to credibly communicate progress and impact, Field to Market's Claims Protocol outlines key requirements projects must meet for the intended claim they seek to make.

4.0 NON-CONFORMITY

Only Projects that meet all requirements for their respective Project Pathway are eligible to become an Active Project.

Once a Project has met all requirements for Active status, Field to Market will list the project as "Active" on the public-facing Project Directory. After this initial listing, projects must submit Annual Reports each year to continue to be listed as "Active". A subset of the information that is reported in Annual Reports, including progress against stated objectives, will be listed publicly to provide transparency into how a project is proceeding against its stated objectives and what opportunities or hurdles have been encountered.

Once a project has been listed on the public-facing Project Directory as "Active", its status will be tracked and posted annually for the lifespan of the project, including the reason for the conclusion of the project. Projects that do not file Annual Reports will have their project status changed to one of the following categories of inactive projects to reflect their non-conformity. Inactive projects will remain on the public-facing Project Directory indefinitely.

5.1 SUSPENDED

A project can be suspended by Field to Market for non-conformity.

A Project can be suspended for the following reasons:

- 1) Not submitting an annual report. An annual report will be considered missed if not completed within one month of the reporting deadline.
- 2) Reasonable complaint about the Project that warrants further investigation
- 3) Not paying licensing fees or membership dues in a timely manner
- 4) The project reports no changes in management or outcomes in three years. (A project must provide evidence of at least one change in management or outcomes to be restored to Active. This requirement is for projects with a duration of three or more years.).

5.2 TERMINATED

The project self-reports that it is ending without achieving project goal(s) and objectives.

Field to Market understands that plans and resourcing may change. It also understands the importance of continuity and credibility in project reporting. If a project must end early, it is important that stakeholders can evaluate progress and also learn if a project ended prior to reaching its stated goal(s) and objectives. After going through the termination process, a public-facing statement that includes the reason for early termination will accompany the project. If the participating farmers in the project wish to continue their continuous improvement journey, Field to Market will make efforts to connect participating farmers from the project being terminated with new Project Sponsors through the Partnership Exchange.

5.0 DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND APPEAL PROCESS

Field to Market will closely and carefully consider all disputes arising from Projects. The following describes the types of claims and communications disputes that will be considered, the dispute resolution process, and public communications regarding disputes. Given the public-facing nature of the Project Directory, information provided by projects and posted on the Project Directory constitutes a form of claim.

Types of Claims Disputes:

- Disputes about a claim or other communication made by a Field to Market member or non-member that refers to: Membership in Field to Market or that references participation in or substantial connection to a Field to Market Project; claims that describe measurements made using Field to Market Fieldprint metrics; or, claims that reference outcomes or impacts using Field to Market Fieldprint metrics.

- Disputes about a claims assessment or a claims assessment process conducted by a third-party assessor.
- Disputes against the actions or decisions of an individual Field to Market staff member or contractor regarding the use of Field to Market' Platform or process-based standard to make claims.

Process:

A. Attempted Resolution

Disputing parties are encouraged to engage and to attempt to resolve disputes prior to filing the claims dispute with Field to Market. Should negotiations between disputing parties fail to reach an agreement, a record of the attempted resolution process should accompany the filed dispute.

B. Appeal Filed

If the dispute cannot be resolved informally, a stakeholder may enter a formal appeal process to dispute the information listed on the project directory by filing an appeal in writing. All appeals and any supporting information related to the dispute must be submitted either via email to claims@fieldtomarket.org or mailed via first class post to:

Field to Market
Attn: Claims Dispute Resolution
777 N Capitol Ave NE
Suite 802
Washington, DC 20002

The initial burden of proof and background for the claims dispute rests with the party raising the dispute, who will be required to provide all of the following information before the dispute will be taken under consideration by Field to Market:

- Information about the party raising the dispute, that includes:
 - Representative organization, contact person, and title/position.
 - Information that demonstrates legitimacy of the party to raise a dispute.
 - Contact information, including email, phone number, and mailing address.
 - Name of the individual or organization that they are concerned with in their appeal.
- Details on nature of the dispute and about which elements of the Field to Market standard is being broken.
- Documentation and other supporting information to directly substantiate the dispute, including a concise narrative with clear links to supporting information that justifies the dispute.
- Written information that previous steps were undertaken to seek resolution directly with the organization concerned in their dispute prior to initiating the Field to Market Dispute Resolution and Appeal Process.

- Recommendations from the party raising the dispute that provide clear, concise and specific actions and activities to correct problems raised in their dispute.
- If the appealing party is an outside stakeholder, it will remain anonymous during the process.

C. INITIAL REVIEW

Upon receipt of the claims dispute, Field to Market will make an initial assessment of the filed dispute and determine whether the dispute is within scope:

1. If the dispute is within scope, Field to Market will notify the party that filed the claims dispute in writing that their dispute is within scope and outline the next steps in the dispute resolution process and intended timeline for response.
2. Field to Market will then request a response in writing from the party in question that addresses the allegations. After 20 business days of the date of receipt of this notification, the available information with respect to the claims dispute will be finalized, and no further evidence will be considered.
3. Within 15 business days of the finalization of the information, the dispute resolution process will begin with subcommittee assisted mediation.
4. In subcommittee mediation, an appointed and sector-diverse subcommittee of Field to Market representatives will assist both parties in generating and negotiating concrete, actionable solutions to the issues in dispute.
 - The subcommittee will be comprised of the Chair of the Field to Market Board of Directors and three other Field to Market member representatives.
 - These three members of the subcommittee will be appointed by the Executive Committee of Field to Market and will each represent a different voting sector.
 - To avoid conflict of interest, any member that is not independent from the project or the appealing party will not be selected to serve on the subcommittee and will abstain from any discussions/decisions about the appeal with subcommittee members.

D. FINAL DECISION

The subcommittee will pursue one of the following outcomes and a final decision must be reached within 30 calendar days:

- Memorandum of Understanding – a document containing concrete, actionable actions to be undertaken by the parties to resolve the issues in dispute to the satisfaction of each.
- Memorandum of Understanding with Outstanding Issues – as above, with specific unresolved issues called out
- Finding of No Agreement – contains a record of the attempted negotiation and a list of the issues that remain unresolved
- Finding of No Conflict – makes note that the negotiation resulted in neither outstanding issues nor remedial actions to resolve issues originally in

dispute

B. DECISION COMMUNICATED

Field to Market will communicate the final decision back to the party requesting appeal within one week as well as the Project Administrator. While the subcommittee decision will not be made public, the project may wish to do its own communication about its status. If the result of the subcommittee findings determines malfeasance or inaccurate information supplied by the project, the appropriate measures to address non-conformity will be taken such as project suspension or termination.

For the full process for claims and communications resolution, please refer to the Field to Market Claims Dispute Resolution Process.

6.0 VERSION HISTORY

| Version/Date | Change | Link |
|--------------|---|------|
| 1.0 | Initial Discussion Draft for Member Comment | N/A |