



Board of Directors | Call Summary May 24, 2016

Present

Directors

Keith Alverson (National Corn Growers Association), Mark Eastham (Walmart), Suzy Friedman (EDF), Stefani Grant (Unilever), Franklin Holley (WWF), Marty Muenzmaier (Cargill), Keith Newhouse (Land O' Lakes), Kari Niedfeldt-Thomas (Mosaic), Gary O' Neill (USDA NRCS), Debbie Reed (Coalition for Agricultural Greenhouse Gases), David Schemm (National Association of Wheat Growers), Jennifer Shaw (Syngenta), Jun Zhu (University of Arkansas)

Staff and Consultants

John Craven (Thompson Coburn), Kate Fairman (Field to Market), Alison Gibson (Field to Market), Betsy Hickman (Field to Market), Paul Hishmeh (Field to Market), Stewart Ramsey (IHS), Rod Snyder (Field to Market), Ray Stewart (Thompson Coburn), Allison Thomson (Field to Market), Grant Wick (Field to Market), Sarah Stokes Alexander (Keystone), Jonathan Geurts (Keystone)

Motions

Debbie Reed moved to approve the minutes from the last Board meeting. Kari Niedfeldt-Thomas seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Kari Niedfeldt-Thomas moved to approve all of the applicants listed as members of Field to Market. Marty Muenzmaier seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Debbie Reed moved to approve Marlen Eve as a member of the Science Advisory Council. Keith Newhouse seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Next Steps and Action Items

- The Board will continue discussion on the draft goals statement over email and raise the decision again in June.
- Suzy Friedman and Kari Niedfeldt-Thomas volunteered to work out the issues related to FTM's fiduciary responsibilities in relationship to MRCC in a small group. Others who are interested in contributing should email Rod.
- The Board will address the API data retention decision in June.

Proceedings

Opening

Rod Snyder opened the call and took attendance.

Ray Stewart read the anti-trust statement aloud.

Stefani Grant raised the business of approval of the previous meeting minutes.

- ***Debbie Reed moved to approve the minutes from the last Board meeting. Kari Niedfeldt-Thomas seconded. The motion passed unanimously.***

Finances

Rod reviewed the financial status of Field to Market (FTM), including the following figures.

- Cash on hand: \$1,119,088
- In the period from January through March, revenue: \$630,114; and expenses: \$558,550

He emphasized that this puts the organization in a good place and noted that the presentation of finances may change/improve as a result of the upcoming audit.

Operations

Rod observed that the financial auditors had been selected and would be on-site in June. He introduced the new graduate interns.

- Alison Gibson will be helping Betsy with communications.
- Grant Wick will be assisting Allison with science and research.

The FTM staff retreat will take place on June 1-2, and the Executive Committee will retreat on July 6th. The hiring of a business manager has been delayed due to an extension of the impact claims timeline, the release of which is now anticipated in November. It was thought that this new position might best be able to assist with implementation of this system after it has been finalized.

Board members commented on the business manager update.

- The impact claims and elements of the business plan are tied to each other, and one needs to be informed by the other. Therefore, FTM should hire someone who might be able to help push the development of claims as well as the business plan.
- The business plan should drive the work of the work groups rather than the other way around.
- Hiring this position soon would allow for a period of onboarding before he/she is expected to really perform.

Employee Manual

Rod updated the Board on a new parental leave policy that had been added into the draft manual, including 6 weeks paid and 6 weeks unpaid up front – increasing to 8 weeks of each after three years of employment with FTM.

An Executive Committee member mentioned that on their call the previous day they had recommended further adjustments before raising the manual for approval.

2017 Staffing Considerations

Stefani Grant reminded the Board of Rod's potential 60-day leave of absence in winter of 2017 should he be elected to the West Virginia House of Delegates in November. A staffing plan will be drafted, ready for review by the Board in August, and up for decision in October.

Rod noted that the draft memo is similar to the one Steve Peterson sent to the Board in 2015, which he recommends also be sent to the full FTM membership. The time commitment would include 1-2 day special sessions at most once per month and usually on weekends throughout the year. The main session would occur annually from mid-January through mid-March.

The Board briefly commented on this update.

- In the memo, it would make sense to stipulate that the Board review this arrangement annually.
- The House of Delegates term is 2 years in length, so the Board could request that Rod not run again if they were aren't satisfied with the arrangement.

Membership

Betsy Hickman introduced the new FTM member applications up for approval.

- Nachurs Alpine (Full membership, agribusiness) – distributes liquid nutrients throughout North America. They were connected to FTM through The Fertilizer Institute and want to lead on-the-ground implementation of the Program with an emphasis on 4R Nutrient Stewardship.
- Bartlett & Co. (Full membership, agribusiness) – a grain merchandizer/miller, with an emphasis on cattle feed. They are excited to collaborate with member companies and want to enroll their own producers in Fieldprint Projects.
- Iowa State University (Affiliate) – has an Agricultural Experiment Station and therefore brings research expertise as their in-kind contribution. They are interested in influencing Fieldprint metrics and contacting growers through their extension service.

Kari Niedfeldt-Thomas moved to approve all of the applicants listed as members of Field to Market. Marty Muenzmaier seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Science Advisory Council

Allison Thomson introduced a new proposed member of the Science Advisory Council.

- Marlen Eve (USDA ARS) – specializes in earth science, greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, soil health, and nutrient management. He serves a major USDA focal point for research and strategy around soil and air resources.

Debbie Reed moved to approve Marlen Eve as a member of the Science Advisory Council. Keith Newhouse seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Goals & Regional Mapping Work Group

Sarah Stokes Alexander reviewed the three primary charges for the work group, which include developing clarity on the meaning of landscape quality and conservation outcomes, evaluating the potential for an absolute greenhouse gas emissions goal, and reviewing the potential for a clearer soil health goal. The group came to the conclusion that the first and third would require more research and convened a workshop to address the second – an absolute reduction goal for greenhouse gas emissions. This workshop resulted in the following proposed amendment to the goal:

Greenhouse Gases – Sustained reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from U.S. cropland per unit of output, while also aspiring to absolute greenhouse gas emission reductions, recognizing the potential carbon sequestration benefits of agriculture and meeting future crop production needs. Field to Market will advocate for the research necessary to continue to inform this goal.

Board members discussed the absolute greenhouse gas reduction goal.

- The inclusion of all of the language in the goal bullet makes it read awkwardly. It would go better in the research section.
 - o This prominent placement was discussed as a way of highlighting the importance of the language and distinguishing it from other goals that have been less thoroughly addressed. As each goal is visited in this way, they might begin to look more alike to this one.
 - o This argument makes sense for the first statement. The “FTM will advocate...” language is what seems out of place.
- The group did not raise some of the soil health statements into the goal statement bullets because of lack of knowledge on how to measure them. This lack of a measure is still the case with an absolute reduction of greenhouse gases.
 - o The group felt that there had been enough progress made on models to include it as a goal.

The Board agreed to continue the drafting discussion through tracked changes and to raise the question again at the June meeting.

Midwest Row Crop Collaborative (MRCC)

Rod introduced the latest thinking on FTM’s staffing relationship to the MRCC. Previously, a full-time staffer was hired by FTM and funded by the MRCC partners. Now, they are looking into an expansion of capacity and a slight redirect. The new staffing plan includes two full-time staff, both based in Washington, DC. A program director would be fully funded by MRCC, and an education & outreach manager would be 75% funded by MRCC, with 25% matched by FTM. The education & outreach manager would develop material for use by trusted advisors, offering a benefit to FTM, which is why the position’s cost would be shared. The estimated figures are as follows.

- Annual budget of \$415,000, including
 - o Salary/benefits - \$281,000
 - o Office space - \$24,000
 - o Travel/conferences/meals - \$26,000
 - o Management fee (cost of time required by existing FTM staff) - \$84,000

Board members discussed the staffing proposal, including the following comments, to which Rod responded as follows.

- The focus of this proposal seems to be on providing services rather than expanding Fieldprint programs; therefore, it seems off-topic.
 - o MRCC has chosen to fund one of the RCPPs (Regional Conservation Partnership Projects), one of the goals of which was to expand usage of the API connection to the Fieldprint Platform, which would help meet FTM’s acreage goal.
- This proposal seems to indicate that MRCC and the Soil Health Partnership (SHP) are working together. This is a potential concern, as SHP is not signed on with 4R Nutrient Stewardship.
 - o Though FTM has signed on as a 4R partner, not all of its members have done so.
- It seems odd that MRCC does not want these staff on location in the Midwest.

- They needed more in the way of leadership than field support. The latter will be staffed through partnerships and other funded positions.
- The relationship between MRCC and FTM may need to be better defined. The funds are separate, but the programs are aligned. FTM would hire MRCC staff but not direct their activities. These staff would be caught between two separate governing bodies, the FTM Board and the MRCC Steering Committee.
 - It is an experiment in scaling up FTM's program, one that the Board has the opportunity to direct.

Rod asked the Board to consider two questions: 1) Does FTM want this program to happen somewhere else or be managed within FTM? 2) Would this arrangement provide enough benefit back to FTM, for example in the form of education programs for trusted advisors? Board members responded as follows.

- It would be a risk for a program within FTM to begin to codify practice recommendations, which might enter into a competitive space.
- A close FTM-MRCC relationship might be troublesome with FTM members who have not been invited to join the MRCC.

Suzy Friedman and Kari Niedfeldt-Thomas volunteered to work out the issues related to FTM's fiduciary responsibilities in relationship to MRCC in a small group. Others who are interested in contributing should email Rod.

Data Retention Policy

Rod reviewed the Technology Work Group's options for the retention of data submitted via the Fieldprint Platform's API connection. The online Calculator already stores everything that is entered on the ZedX secure servers. The options currently being considered for API data retention include the following.

1. No data stored
2. Aggregate outputs only are stored
3. Aggregate inputs and outputs are stored
4. Everything entered down to the field level is stored

The recommendation of the Tech Work Group at this point is for option #3. The aggregation of inputs and outputs would serve as a minimum requirement for companies connecting via the API. Companies that do not wish to spend time aggregating their data would still be able to submit everything if desired.

Board members discussed the options, offering the following ideas.

- Option #4 would require a very clear grower agreement, and it would be best if the field boundaries are stripped out of the data.
- One of the Board members noted that their company would not be in support of options #3 and #4 and suspected that other agricultural software companies would feel the same way.
 - The recommendation of option #3 was made after consulting several data management companies.
- All of these API data retention options would permit growers to access their own data as long as it is retained by the host platform. In the case of the API, the grower would not interact directly with a FTM interface or with FTM-stored data.
- A business manager may help inform this decision by surveying the willingness to pay for this product.

The Board decided to readdress this question in June.

Upcoming Meetings

The calendar invitations have been sent for June's sector calls. FTM staff will provide Board members with standard agendas and slide decks to adapt for their own sectors.

The June plenary schedule includes a media training scheduled immediately prior to the Board meeting for those who are interested.

Adjourn