

Field to Market

Board of Directors meeting summary

November 15, 2016

Atlanta, Georgia

Present

**Directors**

Keith Alverson (NCGA), Suzy Freidman (EDF), Stefani Grant (Unilever), Franklin Holley (WWF), Marty Muenzmaier (Cargill), Keith Newhouse (Land O’ Lakes), Michelle Nutting (Agrium), Gary O’Neill (USDA NRCS), Debbie Reed (C-AGG), Jennifer Shaw (Syngenta), Bob Young (American Farm Bureau Federation), Jun Zhu (University of Arkansas)

**Staff/Consultants**

Catherine Campbell (Marker Campbell) Chisara Ehiemere (Field to Market), Kate Fairman (Field to Market), Jonathan Geurts (Keystone Policy Center), Betsy Hickman (Field to Market), Paul Hishmeh (Field to Market), Laura Petrik (Field to Market), Stewart Ramsey (IHS), Rod Snyder (Field to Market), Allison Thomson (Field to Market)

Motions

*Michelle Nutting makes a motion to approve the Board of Directors minutes from October. Franklin Holley seconds. The motion was approved unanimously.*

*Keith Newhouse makes a motion to approve Columbia, Dartmouth, and Weston Foods as members. Suzy Freidman seconds. The motion was passed unanimously.*

*Keith Newhouse makes a motion to adjust Agrible to full member. Keith Alverson seconds. The motion is approved unanimously*.

Next Steps and Action Items

NEXT STEPS: Board members interested in helping with new member onboarding should email Betsy.

NEXT STEPS: More discussion needed on process for moving organizations from associate to full membership.  
  
NEXT STEPS: January Board meeting will include a longer discussion on verification protocols.

Proceedings

**Opening**

Stefani Grant opened the meeting

Stefani read the anti-trust statement

*Michelle Nutting makes a motion to approve the Board of Directors minutes from October. Franklin Holley seconds. The motion was approved unanimously.*

**Finances**

Rod Snyder gives an update on Field to Market (FTM) financials as of September 30th, 2016. FTM had $1,162,554 cash on hand as of that time. Revenue from January to September is $1,954,274 and expenses are $2,117,207.

Rod informs the Board that the technology build out is a bit over budget due to increased project cost. Professional fees also appear to be over budget; however, that is due to Midwest Row Crop Collaborative spending, not regular FTM programs. Rod explains that FTM has recently transferred all remaining MRCC funds from the FTM bank account to the Keystone Policy Center where the program will now be administered.

**Operations**

Stefani congratulates Betsy Hickman on her new role with Field to Market. Betsy was recently promoted to Vice President of Stakeholder Engagement and Implementation from Communications and Membership Director. The rest of the Board mirrors Stefani’s congratulations.

**Membership**

Betsy reviews the three applicants for membership with FTM. They include Columbia University, Dartmouth College, and Weston Foods. Columbia would want to join as part of the Earth Institute Sustainability Management Program, then later as the full university. They would join as an Affiliate member. Columbia wants to bring their research perspective to FTM from both a science and business angle. Dartmouth College would also join as an Affiliate member. Dartmouth currently has two research projects that would tie into Field to Market: a climate smart ag project and a social science project. Weston Foods is applying as an Associate member of the Brands and Retail sector. Their dues amount would be $10,000. They were recruited by Raszma Zvaners from the American Bakers Association. They are Canadian based and may move to full membership at some point in the future.

Discussion from the Board includes a question on whether Ivy League university participation would be viewed with suspicion from the Grower Sector, as opposed to participation from land-grant universities, or if the same partnership opportunities exist. Another Board member suggests that there are people at non-land-grant universities that are capable of discussing agriculture in the same way as land-grant universities. Additionally, the challenges that we face around agricultural sustainability are broad, and so it would be helpful to have more perspectives.

Betsy says that the Affiliate sector needs to shape what an “in-kind” contribution from a university is. Allison Thomson mentions that Colorado State, despite being a land grant university, did not join as an extension program. She also says that Colombia’s applicant, Bruce Kahn, is more on the teaching side, which would be helpful. Dartmouth is doing projects with land grant universities, in particular Michigan State University. Allison agrees that more work needs to be done to define what is required of affiliate sector members.

Betsy informs that Board that new members are given a thorough new member orientation and that she would welcome more Board participation in that process. A suggestion is made that Board members take the time to bring new members up to speed. Betsy requests that Board members who are willing to be on this welcoming committee email her.

*Keith Newhouse makes a motion to approve Columbia, Dartmouth, and Weston Foods as members. Suzy Freidman seconds. The motion was passed unanimously.*

NEXT STEPS: Board members interested in helping with new member onboarding should email Betsy.

Betsy lets Board know that Agrible has now applied as a full member instead of associate member. Their dues amount would not change because of their annual revenue. They have filled out the full member application. A suggestion is made that FTM waits to allow them to become full member in January at the start of a new fiscal year. Betsy asks the Board their opinion on how to handle this process. Rod points out that we allowed ag tech companies to become full members in the October meeting, so we need to treat Agrible in a consistent fashion.

*Keith Newhouse makes a motion to adjust Agrible to full member. Keith Alverson seconds. The motion is approved unanimously*.

NEXT STEPS: More discussion needed on process for moving organizations from associate to full membership.

**Overview of Sustainable Agriculture Summit and FTM General Assembly**

Betsy provides information on the Sustainable Agriculture Summit and Field to Market General Assembly. Field to Market has partnered with several other agriculture organizations for this year’s Sustainable Agriculture Summit, which runs November 15- November 16th. The Sustainable Agriculture Summit will have 502 attendees.

Betsy then gives information on the Field to Market General Assembly on November 17th. While going over the schedule for the General Assembly, Betsy points out that there will be an orientation session for new members and invited guests. She reminds the Board that Standing Committee meetings are open to observers. She also highlights the 10-year anniversary lunch, which will commemorate a decade since our first meeting in November 2006. Rod goes over guests that will be attending the General Assembly, including: Judy Adler (Turner Foundation), Brett Basel (Dean Foods), Pete Berthelsen (Pheasants Forever), Veronika Dornburg (Shell), Kristin Masincup (Chobani), Daniel Sonke (Campbell’s), Derrick Steen (Missouri Soybean Association), Nate Shepley-Streed (Chobani), Courtney Lareau (Mars Inc), Ali Edwards (SISC), and Abby Anderson (The Andersons). Each guest has been partnered with a Field to Market member to serve as a “host” during the meeting.

Kate Fairman explains the new sector folders for Board members. Every sector will receive a folder to help with running the sector meeting. The agenda for the sector meetings will cover: welcome and introductions, the election of a new Board member, Standing Committee updates from sector representatives, a review of decision items for General Assembly (FY 2017 budget), and any additional sector business as determined by sector members.

**FY 2017 Budget Proposal**

Rod reminds the group about the budget decisions made in October at the Board meeting in Des Moines. The budget continues the transition toward creating a permanent staff structure rather than relying on consultants for a few roles. These staff members would include an Educational Resource Manager and a Fieldprint Program Manager. The Fieldprint Platform rebuild is not included in base budget as separate fundraising is required for it. FTM has started outreach to some foundations for this. Maintenance for the existing platform is included in the presented budget, however.

Rod then provides a comparison of the 2016 budget to the proposed 2017 budget. In 2016, revenue was $2,768,000 and expenses were $2,420,000. For the 2017 proposed budget, revenue will be $2,675,000 and expenses $2,541,400.

**Preview of New Website and Member Portal**

Betsy gives a sneak peek of the new website and member portal. There are additional functions that will be rolled out in the coming weeks, including member spotlights, farmer profiles, case studies, Fieldprint Project directory, a document and resource directory, and collaboration hubs. On Thursday, December 8th, FTM will promote the new website with the web release of the new National Indicators Report. On December 13th, FTM will host a webinar for members on how to create an account to access the member portal and the website features/functionality. A request is made to do a second webinar in January. Betsy confirms that the webinar on December 13 will be recorded and available for those who can’t make the webinar.

One of the highlights of the website is more transparent information on FTM’s program. Previously, a lot of this information was available through the membership prospectus document, which needed to be sent by staff. There is also a list of current FTM member organizations on the website, which can also be sorted by sector. The new member portal will also allow for online filing of Fieldprint Project registration forms, annual reports, and claims requests.

**Verification Committee Update**

Jonathan Geurts presents an update from the Control Union meeting in Washington DC on October 28th. The first topic tackled in that meeting was how to avoid double-counting acres. The proposed method was that FTM would provide a standardized method for generating unique grower IDs across all projects that would be retained by FTM. It was also suggested that a single crop from a single farm cannot be entered in two different Fieldprint Projects in a given year. An example here is that if a grower sells corn to multiple companies, only one company can engage the grower in a Fieldprint project. A question is asked on how this works with the current policy on data retention. Rod says that this draft policy needs a lot more vetting from FTM. He clarifies that the unique grower IDs would be included as part of aggregated datasets, so you can check that growers aren’t be entered twice but you can’t trace any specific outcomes to one particular grower. A comment is made that this proposed method raises potential concerns around grower privacy.

As a second topic, Control Union presented a system where credits (or certificates of Fieldprint completion) are passed down the supply chain. The board raised concerns about potentially creating a market where these credits would be exchanged. Policies would need to be in place to safeguard against this, including clear delineation around companies are that involved in a specific Fieldprint Project and would be eligible to acquire a credit.

The third topic was Measurement Claims verification staying with a 2nd party. For this, claims would remain under FTM review. Control Union will examine the risks posed by the claims review process as it currently stands. An option for 3rd party review is being drafted now. For projects that do not already provide project-level aggregated data, they will be asked to do so or seek their own third party assessment.

The final topic discussed was continuing to seek to minimize grower contact. FTM requested that Control Union analyze the risk inherent in a system with zero grower contact by third party assessors. This is unlike other sustainability systems, but Control Union is developing approaches to minimize grower contacts. Contact will be minimal in projects where trained crop advisors are primarily responsible for the accurate entry of grower data in the Fieldprint Platform. There was a brief discussion on the possibility of generating tiers of claims assurance. Stefani thanks Jonathan for his work on this as it’s his last Board meeting with FTM.

NEXT STEPS: January Board meeting will include a longer discussion on verification protocols.

**National Indicators Report**

Allison Thomson gives an update on the National Indicators Report, which is in the layout process now. The three main parts of the report are environmental indicators, national trends, and socioeconomic indicators. The environmental indicators section includes methodology on land use, irrigation water use, energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, and soil erosion. The crops included are barley, corn for grain, corn for silage, cotton, peanuts, potatoes, rice, soybeans, sugar beets, and wheat. Unfortunately, Alfalfa did not make it into this report due to a need for additional information, but will be released as a supplement in 2017. The national trends section includes biodiversity and land cover change, soil carbon, and water quality. The socioeconomic indicators cover farm financial health, farm profitability, generation of economic value, worker safety, and labor productivity.

Allison shares some specific environmental indicator findings: all primary environmental indicators, with the exception of soil conservation for peanuts, showed improved environmental performance in 2015 when compared directly to 1980; improvement in environmental performance was largely drive by increases in crop yield; and in a number of crops there is a clear plateauing of improvement. Allison will present the spidergrams showing these finding on Thursday during the General Assembly.

New metrics in the report include biodiversity, soil carbon, and water quality. The aim for this was to see if there was data to establish if there was a national trend in these metrics. For biodiversity FTM focused on land cover change using government reports from USGS. For soil carbon, FTM focused on reports from the USDA. For water quality FTM looked at in-stream monitoring from USGS and conservation practice simulation studies.

A question is raised about whether specific practices are mentioned in the water quality section. Allison clarifies that the national indicators report does not cover this, but information is available in government reports referenced.

Allison then moves on to the socioeconomic indicator findings. Some specific findings that are highlighted include: improvements in farm financial health, a lack of clear national trend line regarding crop specific farm profitability, improvements in worker safety, and improvements in labor productivity for most crops.

The report will be released online on December 7 or 8, and will be available as a full document at that time. Allison also mentions to the group that the report has undergone independent review. Rod thanks Allison for her work on the National Indicators Report.

A question is raised if SAI Platform socioeconomic indicators match with the indicators explored in the socioeconomic section of the National Indicators Report. Allison will consider this.

**Fieldprint Calculator 3.0 Development**

Paul gives a quick status update on Fieldprint Platform 3.0. The initial Tech Advisory Council call will be in mid-December. A statement of work for an RFP will be created in January. Finalization of a new vendor will take place in February. The new vendor will provide full life cycle support to include initial business and technical analysis. The completion of version 3.0 development and implementation is slated for November 2017.

**Proposed Meeting Schedule for 2017**

Rod presents the Board with the proposed meetings dates for 2017. There is discussion about changing the Board meeting to January 10-11 instead of January 11-12. After quick consideration from the Board, it is decided to move the meeting date.

**Adjourn**

Stefani closed the meeting.