

# PROJECT HANDBOOK

**COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING  
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS**



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## 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 accelerating continuous improvement (*Figure 1*), which is grounded in a foundation that addresses local natural resource concerns while also delivering solutions to global sustainable development priorities.

By offering three unique pathways for continuous improvement, 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 supply chain transparency by benchmarking sustainability performance, or supporting innovative incentive programs to accelerate adoption of more sustainable practices, your organization can benefit from Field to Market's flexible and yet standardized approach to project design and implementation. Encapsulated in a Process-Based Standard, Field to Market's approach offers your organization opportunities to contribute to collective efforts of the value chain to create shared value, improve environmental outcomes and unlock lasting impact. This handbook seeks to equip you with the tools needed to drive sustainable agriculture forward.

You have three options available for how your organization can support farmers in advancing on their individual journeys of continuous improvement:



### INCUBATION

Creates enabling conditions for continuous improvement by engaging farmers on the connection between how farm management decisions impact at least one sustainability outcome. Incubation Projects address the communications gap that often exists between farmers and the value chain, by seeking to normalize sustainability and link it to terms that farmers understand and utilize. These projects help accelerate continuous improvement by providing education on what practices can lead to improvements in a given sustainability outcome, as well as access to financial and/or technical assistance to facilitate conservation planning, practice and technology adoption.



### INSIGHT

Offers farmers the opportunity to build upon their sustainability knowledge by examining their management practices through a systems lens utilizing the sustainability metrics of the Fieldprint Platform. Insight Projects help farmers assess their environmental impact utilizing Field to Market's pre-competitive suite of science-based sustainability metrics, which enable farmers to document and demonstrate sustainability performance while also identifying opportunities for continuous improvement through benchmarking against their peers at the project, state and national levels. For the value chain, Insight Projects offer increased visibility into the sustainability performance of their complex commodity supply chains.

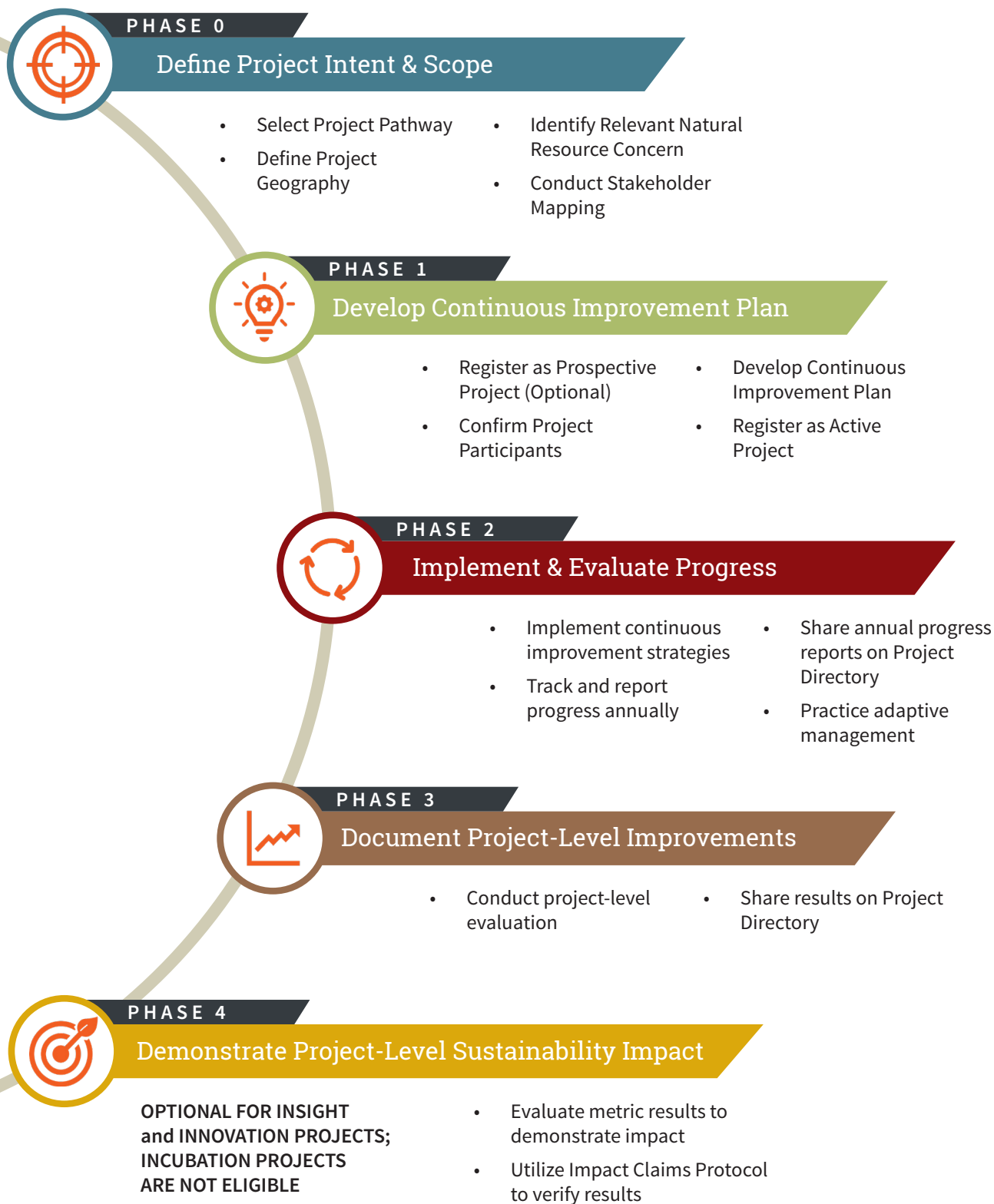


### INNOVATION

Provides tangible support for farmers in accelerating adoption of practices that deliver improved sustainability outcomes, documented by use of the Fieldprint Platform, by offering technical assistance and/or value-added incentives. Innovation Projects offer farmers the support they need to transition to more sustainable practices, addressing the agronomic and financial risk farmers face when changing management practices. Projects can provide a variety of incentives from financial assistance to access to necessary equipment, tools or products to the technical assistance in optimizing effectiveness of practice.

**FIGURE 1**

**Field to Market's Process for Accelerating Continuous Improvement**





## Field to Market's Theory of Change

Field to Market has identified a suite of common barriers farmers face when addressing local natural resource concerns and contributing solutions to global sustainability challenges. Our theory of change focuses on the role the value chain can play to help farmers advance on their journey of continuous improvement by overcoming common barriers, including but not limited to:

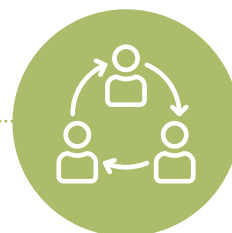
- Lack of information and technical assistance
- Additional time requirements
- Capital investment required to adopt a new practice
- The time horizon for the return on investment



**When we create an environment that brings all stakeholders across the food and ag value chain to the table to collaborate on solutions to scale sustainable agriculture...**

### CONVENING DIVERSE STAKEHOLDERS

- Convening growers, agribusiness, brands, retailers, civil society, academia and public sector partners
- Achieving balance in governance and decision-making bodies
- Ensuring equal representation and share of voice across all sectors



**And achieve alignment across sectors on a common definition and measurement framework for sustainable agriculture and commit to a shared course of action...**

### FOSTERING CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION

- Strengthening science- and outcomes-based resources for measuring sustainability performance
- Co-creating strategies to address key opportunities and barriers in scaling sustainable agriculture



**And scale the ability of farmers to benchmark sustainability performance in the platform of their choice, while increasing their understanding of how to both document stewardship and identify focal areas for continuous improvement...**

### ADVANCING SHARED MEASUREMENT & LEARNING

- Providing farmers with greater choice in accessing pre-competitive sustainability metrics by scaling integration with existing technology platforms
- Building capacity of trusted farmer advisers to advance sustainable agriculture through educational resources and training opportunities



**And enable the value chain to support farmers' continuous improvement journey by offering a stepwise program with value added pathways to leverage data and verified impact...**

### DRIVING COLLECTIVE ACTION

- Facilitating partnerships to support farmers in delivering improved environmental outcomes at the field and landscape levels
- Offering a consistent approach to accelerating sustainable outcomes for agriculture through a process-based standard
- Supporting stakeholders across the value chain to help growers advance on their continuous improvement journeys



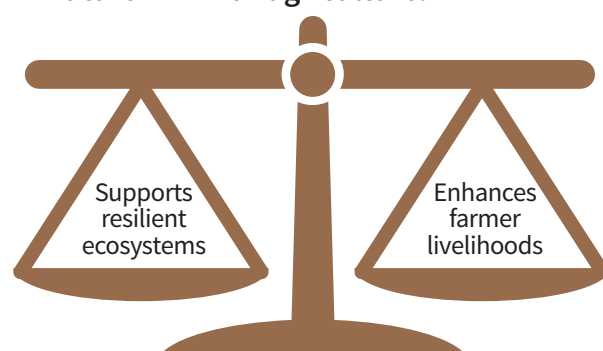
**As a result, we believe more farmers will adopt practices that deliver improvements in productivity, profitability and environmental outcomes...**

### ACCELERATING SUSTAINABLE OUTCOMES

- Providing tangible support to farmers to overcome the financial and agronomic risk of adopting new practices
- Enabling sustainability claims focused on increased adoption and improvement trends
- Supporting farmers and the value chain to quantify sustained improvements over time



**By working together, we will realize a future in which agriculture:**



**Creating a future that is equitable and sustainable.**

## Key Principles of Continuous Improvement Projects

As defined in Field to Market's Process-Based Standard, there are five elements are essential building blocks required 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

Through project registration participants publicly commit to support growers in pursuing opportunities for continuous improvement through providing direct or in-kind investments in the project.

### Measurable Objective(s)

A Continuous Improvement Project must define the near-term scope of the project with at least one timebound and measurable objective and clearly establish the baseline against which the project will evaluate success. Depending on project pathway, these objectives focus on engagement, adoption and/or impact.

### Continuous Improvement Plan

A Continuous Improvement Project must develop and implement a Continuous Improvement Plan designed to achieve the project's objective(s) and maximize opportunities to support growers in pursuing continuous improvement that addresses pressing local natural resource concerns and global sustainable development priorities. To be enrolled in the Accelerator, all projects must publish their Continuous Improvement Plan and associated targets on the Project Directory.

### Progress Tracking and Reporting

A Continuous Improvement Project must annually track progress toward the objective(s) in the Continuous Improvement Plan and report progress and any related adaptive management publicly. All Continuous Improvement Projects are expected to make progress toward their stated objective(s) over time and be compared against baselines set for each.

For guidance on available claims, please refer to Phase 4 and the [Understanding Claims Quick Start Guide](#).



## Demonstrating Principles in Action

While the Process-Based Standard outlines these five core principles each project must adhere to, there is freedom to select strategies tailored to your organization's priorities in meeting these eligibility requirements for projects enrolled in the Continuous Improvement Accelerator. The following guidance is offered to help you shape and develop the most appropriate strategy to fulfill the requirements of the standard.

### Defining Project Roles and Responsibilities of Diverse Stakeholders

The success of a Continuous Improvement Project is dependent upon the contributions of a variety of actors each playing to their strengths. Listed below are the types of roles and responsibilities you may employ throughout your project's lifecycle. Many of these functions could be combined into one role with several responsibilities.

**Project Sponsor** — A Field to Market Full or Associate Member organization who agrees to participate in project design and contribute resources towards project implementation. For Associate Members only, an annual project licensing fee is required to be listed as a Project Sponsor.

**Project Owner** — In the context of verifying claims, the Primary Sponsor may be referred to as the "Project Owner" and will assign responsibility for ensuring that processes are in place to support the assessment and verification of a claim. The Project Owner defines the overall strategy and direction of the Continuous Improvement Project. For supply chain projects with multiple downstream customers, the Project Owner also is also responsible for allocating growers, acres and associated claims.

**Silent Partner** – Associate Member and/or non-member organization of Field to Market, that agrees to anonymously participate in Project design, contribution of resources, and/or local knowledge of growing and conservation practices. When choosing Project Partners, considerations include the organization's ability to provide financial and other resources, such as analytics, reporting, or project management; alignment with Project goals and objectives; or be an appropriate member of supply/value chain.

**Implementation Partner** – Organizations (member and/or non-member) contracted by Project Sponsors to provide a variety of services including technical assistance, management of data, and/or serve as the Project Specialist as defined below. Field to Market has developed an Implementation Partner Agreement form to outline the rights and responsibilities for organizations serving in this role.

Project Implementation Partners can include local or other regionally appropriate organizations, such as:

- Agricultural Extension services usually offered through Land Grant Universities
- Other agricultural universities and colleges
- State environmental or natural resources departments – Each state may have a different title for their department that handles state environmental issues, but each usually enforces state and federal laws that protect air, land and water through technical assistance, permitting and compliance programs.
- Certified Crop Advisers (CCA) meet the rigorous standards set by the American Society of Agronomy include education and experience standards, passing examinations, continuing education and subscribing to a code of ethics.
- Ag retailers and other Farm Management Service Providers supply farmers with products and services such as crop scouting, soil testing, field mapping, custom planting and application and development of nutrient management and farm management plans.
- Technical Service Providers (TSP) – TSPs are individuals or businesses that are vetted by NRCS and have technical expertise in conservation planning and design for a variety of conservation activities. TechReg is an online registry of certified TSPs developed by NRCS, which may include but not limited to trusted advisers from the categories above.

**Project Administrator** – A representative of the Project Sponsor organization that serves as the primary point of contact and oversees the Project from beginning to end and assigns resources as needed.

**Project Specialist** – Employee(s) of Project Sponsor or Implementation Partner organizations who provides one-on-one data collection assistance to farmers. The Project Specialist may provide and contribute to analysis and evaluation feedback. This role has particularly important responsibilities for supporting the verification requirements for Innovation Projects that seek to make impact claims.

### Sharing Your Commitment to Support Farmers' Continuous Improvement Journey

Each Continuous Improvement Project is required to develop a public-facing summary statement that outlines how Project Sponsors and Partners commit to supporting farmers' journey of continuous improvement. As a key component to registering active projects, this summary statement also provides an overview of the project's continuous improvement goals and strategy. This summary is the primary reference for project information shared publicly on the Project Directory and on the member-only Partnership Exchange.

To see sample statements, visit [Field to Market's Project Directory](#). The *Quick Start Guide to Continuous Improvement Goal & Objective Setting* can be a helpful resource in walking you through effective components of a public-facing commitment.

### Defining Your Project's Continuous Improvement Goal(s), Objective(s), & Strategy

As a demonstration of your commitment to supporting farmers' continuous improvement journey, each project must develop a Continuous Improvement Plan that identifies the goal(s), objective(s) and strategy the project will utilize to accelerate continuous improvement. The plan will help you in meeting two core requirements all projects must fulfill: time-bound, measurable objectives and the accompanying plan that will be utilized to achieve those objectives. The *Quick Start Guide to Continuous Improvement Goal & Objective Setting* can be a helpful resource in guiding you through key foundational elements critical to developing an effective plan.

**Continuous Improvement Goal(s)** — Establishing mutually agreed upon Continuous Improvement goal(s) with Project Sponsors and Partners is crucial to project success. Each project must define the outcome(s) it seeks to achieve to address locally relevant resource concerns and contribute solutions to global sustainable development priorities. Projects may focus on improving a single sustainability indicator. However, it is important to remember the linkages between indicators when determining the overall goal for the project.

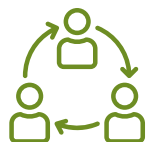
As you craft your continuous improvement goal, reflect on what capabilities and resources your project can uniquely offer to help participating farmers advance on their journey of continuous improvement. To inform your goal statement, it is helpful to reflect on the underlying intent of the Project Pathway you selected; the natural resource concerns where your project is located; and the collective sustainability priorities of the sponsors and partners engaged in the project.

Collectively working through these components up front with other project sponsors and partners is time well spent to lay the foundation for the collaboration to function effectively. This allows you to identify potential challenges to achieving your goals such as capacity, economic barriers, competition, market, or resource challenges.

**Continuous Improvement Objective(s)** — After your project has defined its Continuous Improvement Goal, you can move on to the next step of designing your Continuous Improvement Plan: developing objectives that will help you communicate both the continuous improvement strategy your project will employ and how your project will evaluate progress. Field to Market's Process-Based Standard for Accelerating Continuous Improvement requires all projects enrolled in the Continuous Improvement Accelerator to develop at least one timebound, measurable objective and establish a corresponding baseline against which the project will evaluate progress in achieving its intended outcome.



There is freedom within the frame of Field to Market's Process-Based Standard for each project to meet the core requirement, while setting objectives tailored to meet your project's unique intent, needs and circumstances. As you develop the continuous improvement objectives, consider the following types of continuous improvement objectives to guide your strategy:



#### **Engagement**

Focuses on the number of farmers or acres your project will seek to engage.



#### **Adoption**

Centers on the influence your project seeks to have in increasing adoption of practices proven to drive improved outcomes.



#### **Impact**

Focuses on quantifying sustained improvements in sustainability outcome(s).

To assess progress against the Continuous Improvement Objective, each project must set a baseline from which to evaluate and measure continuous improvement. Baselines can be established through surveys, outreach to local technical assistance organizations or aggregators, and/or baseline measurement within the Fieldprint Platform for the first year of data collection.

### **Grower Engagement**

A key strategy that will influence your project's ability to deliver upon established continuous improvement goal(s) and objective(s) is a defined approach for grower engagement which identifies methods in which the project will reach, recruit, engage and retain growers in the project. Each project is required to provide a feedback mechanism that enables farmers to identify and pursue opportunities for continuous improvement. Examples of tangible outcomes that participating growers receive as a result of their involvement in the project, include the following, but not limited to:



#### **Incubation**

Conservation plan, nutrient management plan, soil moisture sensors, irrigation water sensors, etc.



#### **Insight**

Actionable feedback on Fieldprint Analysis and peer-to-peer comparison at annual grower meetings



#### **Innovation**

Technical assistance on effective practice implementation; cost-share; supply of specialized equipment, etc.

Building on trusted relationships, successful projects have used a variety of methods to reach, recruit, engage and retain growers. Examples include, but are not limited to, community outreach mailers, targeted outreach (calls or email) and/or in-person meetings and events. From field days to individual meetings, projects only succeed if you are able to connect with farmers, understand their needs, and provide resources to address the needs.

### Investing in Continuous Improvement

Innovation Projects are required to document the strategies the project will employ to advance the continuous improvement objectives previously identified and highlight what direct investments the project will make to support farmers in adopting conservation practices.

Projects should collaborate with national and local conservation organizations that can provide guidance on the appropriate practice selection. For a full list of conservation practice standards you can visit the [NRCS website](#). Other organizations that can provide guidance are conservation districts, EPA agricultural advisers, University Extension, CCAs, etc. For examples of possible incentives, please reference the [Value-Added Case Studies White Paper](#).

### Data Privacy and Confidentiality Principles

Field to Market is committed to grower data privacy, control and security and the use of that data to help farmers improve their sustainability performance. We commit to the follow data privacy and security principles:

- **We agree to clearly outline our data policy and use:**
  - We will clearly explain what the data policies are. This includes who has access to data (who can see it, use it, or take control of it).
- **We believe that individual farmer data belongs to and is owned by the grower:**
  - We will never rent or sell your data.
  - We will encourage adoption of data standards that are in the public trust.
- **We commit to using data only for its intended purpose:**
  - By default, we will only use data in our system to provide sustainability results, analyze sustainability trends in aggregate, assess aggregate sustainability performance, improve our service and quality, and understand what features users desire down the road.
- **We will explicitly seek grower authorization for any additional data use and will clearly outline how growers can terminate that use:**
  - For data uses other than those listed above, we will provide a clear and transparent explanation of the project, and we will not proceed to use your data without your consent.
  - For any Continuous Improvement Project that you opt into, you will be able to terminate your participation through a clearly defined process outlined when you enroll.
  - Only Field to Market is authorized to make requests to growers for additional data use, including for research purposes. No third party will receive any of your data without your consent.
- **Any Continuous Improvement Project that you opt-in or elect to participate will provide disclosure of:**
  - What the project is and how it may benefit to you
  - What data of yours will be used
  - How the data is anonymized and the level of aggregation of the results
  - To whom the aggregated results are provided
  - What the process is around terminating your participation in the project and requesting removal of your data, if desired

- **Our partners must be aligned with our data privacy and security principles:**
  - We commit our technology partner and qualified data management partners to these same principles. All partners working with Field to Market must understand and be aligned with these data privacy and security principles.
- **Our technology partner agrees to make every reasonable effort to keep your data safe and secure:**
  - We will work with our technology partner that hosts and administers the Fieldprint Platform to ensure that your farm data is protected with appropriate security safeguards against risks such as data loss or unauthorized access, destruction, use, modification or disclosure.
- **Field to Market pledges to only analyze and report data on an aggregate level and will never identify individual farm operations:**
  - While growers may elect to share their individual farm data with Field to Market to analyze their sustainability performance, we agree that Field to Market staff will never identify individual farm operations and will take the appropriate measures to ensure that each farmer's personally identifiable information is safeguarded through use of anonymized data IDs.

### Privacy Policies for Project Data

It is required that each Project develop a privacy policy that clearly indicates who will have access to individual farmer data and under what circumstances. This policy must be agreed upon by the Project Sponsors and Partners and understood by all grower participants. It may be a separate written policy signed by each farmer or an appendix to a participation agreement.

A privacy policy should include the following principles:

**Data Privacy** — Project Sponsors and Partners must acknowledge agreement and compliance with Field to Market's data privacy and confidentiality principles.

**Level of Data Access by Project Sponsor and Partner** — Project Sponsors and Partners should decide at what level they will expect to access grower data. Project Sponsors may only want to access participation data to track progress towards participation goals. However, the comprehensive field data may be used for grower support and data analysis.

**Data Analysis** — In cases where a third-party organization or persons are providing data analysis, The Project Sponsor is responsible to ensuring Field to Market privacy principles and policies are adhered to. Therefore, access is limited to aggregate data and results including both consistent anonymized grower identifications and associated field data.

**Sharing of Results** — The policy should address how Project results will be anonymized and aggregated for sharing with the farmers and publicly.

By opting into a Project, farmers express consent to sharing anonymized Fieldprint data and results with the Project Sponsor(s) and Field to Market. Once a participant has authorized data-sharing by entering a project key and associating fields with a Project, data is accessible to Project Sponsors that will protect this data in accordance with the Field to Market data privacy guidelines and policy.

## Field to Market Resources and Support

Field to Market provides complimentary design and implementation support from Field to Market staff up to 16 hours for Full Members and eight hours for Associate Members per project in the first year of project engagement. Subsequent complimentary staff support provided is up to four hours for Full Members and two hours for Associate Members. Additional hours are the responsibility of the Project Sponsors receiving support services.

### **Project General Support**

Field to Market's Program Director provides consulting on the development and implementation phases of Projects.

### **Fieldprint Platform Support**

Field to Market's Data and Technology Director provides troubleshooting and Fieldprint Platform support throughout the Project when accessing the Fieldprint Platform through the Field to Market web-interface.

### **Project Verification Support**

Field to Market's Assurance Director provides consulting on the verification and claims protocols for Projects.



## Pathway Specific Process 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.





## INCUBATION PROJECTS

Incubation Projects are designed to create enabling conditions to engage farmers in the building blocks of sustainable agriculture. Each Incubation Project must help farmers establish 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 0

#### Define Project Intent & Scope

The scoping stage 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 should be established to complete project registration:

- Specific sustainability challenges and natural resource concerns addressed within selected project geography
- Goals and objectives
- Grower engagement plan
- Potential Project Sponsors, Partners, and participating farmers identified to reach the multi-stakeholder participation

Projects can take many various pathways and the scope varies. For example, a Project could be geographical in scope (e.g. focusing on a priority watershed or area), crop-focused (e.g. an ingredient in the Project Sponsor's supply chain), or outcome-focused (e.g. measuring the impacts of a best management practice in a targeted area or group). Additionally, they can be tied to a production volume that requires an associated accounting system or may not involve volume tracking.

It is critical to identify the scope early on to organize an approach to exploratory questions. For example, a geographic approach could include consulting the local Soil and Water Conservation District or other local conservation organization to learn about priority issues, obtaining water quality data from state agency data, or meeting with the Farm Bureau or local NRCS to learn about what is happening on the ground and potential avenues to pursue to generate interest and engagement in the Project.

Project Sponsors are encouraged to avail themselves of Field to Market staff when thinking through Project goals and objectives. Field to Market support can take many different forms, such as an informal phone conversation to discuss ideas, an individual or small group goal-setting exercise, or a facilitated meeting or conference call to draw out interests and values and determine common goals.

**Geographic Scope:** While all projects focus on a state level at minimum, it is encouraged that projects examine boundaries at a sub-state level, either grouping at counties, watersheds or supply sheds.



**Crops:** Projects identify and focus on at least one of the crops within Field to Market's program. The current crops that are included are:



Corn  
for grain



Cotton



Potatoes



Rice



Soybeans



Wheat



Alfalfa



Barley



Corn  
silage



Peanuts



Sugar  
Beets

**Natural Resource Concern:** Projects identify at least one natural resource concern that the project's continuous improvement objective(s) will address relevant to pressing local conservation priorities in the project region and/or global sustainable development priorities and select at least one corresponding Field to Market metric.

Our approach allows organizations across the food and agriculture value chain to substantively contribute to the global goals through their participation in Field to Market. We have [mapped](#) how our efforts to scale sustainable agriculture in the United States contribute to this sustainable development agenda, and we remain committed to advancing solutions to pressing global challenges.

Key natural resource concerns can be identified through a variety of sources, including local conservation organizations or national designations. We encourage you to review the following national resources and contact expert local organizations to ensure your project's continuous improvement goal(s) and objectives are relevant to the location where the project is sited.

- [NRCS Critical Conservation Areas Resource Concern Priorities](#)
- [EPA Impaired Waterways](#)
- [NRCS & USFWS Working Lands for Wildlife Target Areas](#)
- [NRCS Landscape Conservation Initiatives](#)
- [NRCS National EQIP Initiatives](#)





## PHASE 1

### Develop Continuous Improvement Plan

Continuous Improvement is a core component of the Field to Market approach. A Field to Market Continuous Improvement Plan must be submitted and approved for all projects. It is recommended that entities desiring to make claims review the requirements as early as possible to assist in determining Continuous Improvement goals and target metrics, and to build a strong project foundation. Even in cases where a project does not foresee filing an impact claim, continuous improvement goals and regional natural resource concerns are to be considered.

Organizations that already have a comprehensive plan detailed for their project can submit it to Field to Market along with a completed Continuous Improvement Plan Form that references the broader plan. For organizations that do not have a plan, the Continuous Improvement Plan Form can be used as a development guide. The form asks questions related to the identification of regional natural resource concerns, continuous improvement goals, mechanisms identified for achieving continuous improvement goals, and best management practices that are being promoted by the Project.

**Sustainability Indicators:** Projects target improvement in at least one of Field to Market's eight sustainability indicators. These indicators are biodiversity, energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, irrigation water use, land use, soil carbon, soil conservation, and water quality.

Use of the Fieldprint Platform is not required for Incubation Projects as improvement will be measured through implementation of the project's Continuous Improvement Plan. However, the selection of sustainability indicators should align to the relevant natural resource concerns identified within the project geography. Below are examples of natural resource concerns and the associated sustainability indicators:

#### CLIMATE CHANGE



Greenhouse Gas Emissions,  
Energy Use, & Soil Carbon

#### ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION



Land Use & Biodiversity

#### SOIL HEALTH/QUALITY



Soil Carbon & Soil Conservation

#### WATER SCARCITY



Irrigation Water Use

#### WATER QUALITY



Water Quality & Soil Conservation



**Objective(s) & Baseline(s):** As noted in the Project Principles section, Projects define the near-term scope with at least one timebound, measurable objective and clearly establish the baseline against which the project will evaluate success publicly. Depending on project pathway, these objectives focus on engagement, adoption and/or impact.

Determining baselines for progress reporting. Baselines can be established through surveys, outreach to local technical assistance organizations or aggregators, and/or baseline measurement.

**Relevant Management Practices:** Projects consider what suite of locally relevant practices can contribute solutions to pressing natural resource concerns in the region before developing supporting continuous improvement strategies. Through the Partnership Exchange you can explore the variety of support available from across the Field to Market for selection of management practices, tools and resources.

- That agronomic and engineering technical assistance available regionally from Field to Market civil society and agribusiness members.
- Tools and products allow projects to view those inputs, technologies or other products which have been developed by Field to Market agribusiness members and peer-reviewed to prove they can improve sustainability outcomes

**Continuous Improvement Strategies and Activities:** Projects' continuous improvement strategies and activities focus on providing participating farmers with a lasting, tangible resource or practice change 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. Practice changes include financial and/or technical assistance with the implementation of conservation practices such as planting pollinator habitat or using cover crops.



## PHASE 2

### Implement & Evaluate Progress

Annual Reports must be submitted during the reporting period (January 1 through April 30) to maintain an Active Project registration on the public-facing Project Directory. Please note that delinquent reporting will result in the public-facing status being changed to reflect non-conformity (Suspended). The information provided in your annual report will serve as a public-facing report on progress achieved against your project's continuous improvement goal(s) and objectives.

Timely and accurate reporting ensures that your organization can credibly demonstrate your efforts to accelerate continuous improvement and support Field to Market in demonstrating the collective impact of all members in driving sustainable agriculture forward.

**Implementation:** Projects implement continuous improvement strategies and activities to deliver against the measurable, timebound objective(s) outlined in their Continuous Improvement Plan. The Partnership Exchange allows members to highlight implementation support capabilities and expertise available.





**Annual Reporting:** Projects track and report progress annually against the Continuous Improvement Plan, submitting an Annual Report by April 30 for each year the project is active. All Annual Reports will become visible on the public-facing Project Directory after they have been reviewed and approved by Field to Market staff. 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 objective progress. To understand the requirements for each level of verification, please review the Assurance Principles documentation developed by the Verification Committee.

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

Working with existing farmer groups, commodity groups, and locally respected farmers can provide the recruitment and retention boost to set your Continuous Improvement Project up for success. This local by-in creates an atmosphere of trust and acceptance for future farmers.

A core component of the Continuous Improvement Plans is a strategy for using grower engagement to address local resource concerns and achieve goals in sustainability outcomes.

#### An example Grower Engagement Plan:

*Prior to the start of the Project, all Project Sponsors and Partners met to identify the target farmer demographic and incentives for recruitment and retention. Grain Company ABC engages its supplier growers in multiple ways. Each facility has a local team of merchants that communicates directly with its supplier growers regarding price and delivery schedules. Over time, Grain Company ABC has developed strong relationships with these growers built on mutual trust. Building on these strong relationships Grain Company ABC's sustainability team is able to identify potential growers for participation and creates a grower list for outreach. Prior to outreach, the team develops an incentive strategy and mission statement for grower recruitment and retention. The sustainability project manager contacts growers directly to determine their interest in participation.*





**Adaptive Management:** Projects are encouraged to adapt their approach to advancing continuous improvement if the annual review highlights current strategies and activities are ineffective in delivering progress against the measurable, timebound objective(s). Based on the performance of our legacy Continuous Improvement Projects, Field to Market identifies the following adaptive management techniques that build on the importance of collaborations, measurement, and feedback (Figure 1).

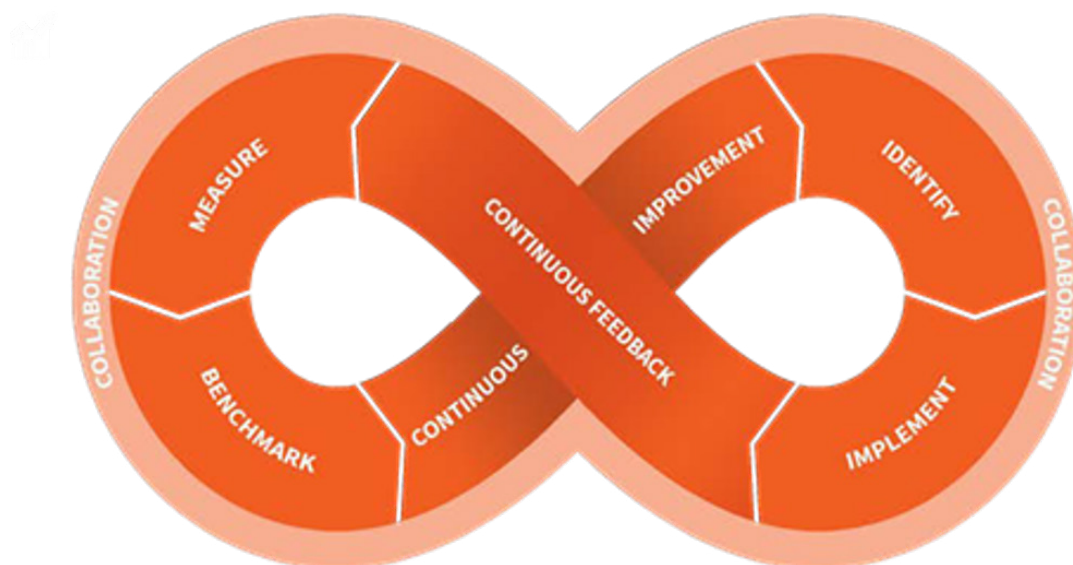


FIGURE 1

**As a project, evaluate what worked well, while also documenting lessons learned on less effective approaches to improve understanding and continue to engage and share feedback with participating farmers before next growing season.**



### PHASE 3

## Document Project-Level Improvements

Our goal is to support you in communicating the efforts you have taken to support farmers in accelerating continuous improvement in the targeted sustainability outcome and to create an authentic conversation to better inform stakeholders on the challenges and successes in advancing sustainable agriculture.

**Evaluation:** Projects evaluate how their engagement supports farmers in pursuing improvement in the targeted sustainability outcome by comparing results against established project baseline(s).

**Result(s) Sharing:** Upon project completion, each project publicly shares 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).



## INSIGHT PROJECTS

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 0

#### Define Project Intent & Scope

The scoping stage 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 should be established to complete project registration:

- Specific sustainability challenges and natural resource concerns addressed within selected project geography
- Goals and objectives
- Grower engagement plan
- Potential Project Sponsors, Partners, and participating farmers identified to reach the multi-stakeholder participation
- Fieldprint Platform Access — online or through a Qualified Data Management Partner

Projects can take many various pathways and the scope varies. For example, a Project could be geographical in scope (e.g. focusing on a priority watershed or area), crop-focused (e.g. an ingredient in the Project Sponsor's supply chain), or outcome-focused (e.g. measuring the impacts of a best management practice in a targeted area or group). Additionally, they can be tied to a production volume that requires an associated accounting system or may not involve volume tracking.

It is critical to identify the scope early on to organize an approach to exploratory questions. For example, a geographic approach could include consulting the local Soil and Water Conservation District or other local conservation organization to learn about priority issues, obtaining water quality data from state agency data, or meeting with the Farm Bureau or local NRCS to learn about what is happening on the ground and potential avenues to pursue to generate interest and engagement in the Project.

Project Sponsors are encouraged to avail themselves of Field to Market staff when thinking through Project goals and objectives. Field to Market support can take many different forms, such as an informal phone conversation to discuss ideas, an individual or small group goal-setting exercise, or a facilitated meeting or conference call to draw out interests and values and determine common goals.

**Geographic Scope:** While all projects focus on a state level at minimum, it is encouraged that projects examine boundaries at a sub-state level, either grouping at counties, watersheds or supply sheds.



**Crops:** Projects identify and focus on at least one of the crops within Field to Market's program. The current crops that are:



Corn  
for grain



Cotton



Potatoes



Rice



Soybeans



Wheat



Alfalfa



Barley



Corn  
silage



Peanuts



Sugar  
Beets

**Natural Resource Concern:** Projects identify at least one natural resource concern that the project's continuous improvement objective(s) will address relevant to pressing local conservation priorities in the project region and/or global sustainable development priorities and select at least one corresponding Field to Market metric.

Our approach allows organizations across the food and agriculture value chain to substantively contribute to the global goals through their participation in Field to Market. We have [mapped](#) how our efforts to scale sustainable agriculture in the United States contribute to this sustainable development agenda, and we remain committed to advancing solutions to pressing global challenges.

Key natural resource concerns can be identified through a variety of sources, including local conservation organizations or national designations. We encourage you to review the following national resources and contact expert local organizations to ensure your project's continuous improvement goal(s) and objectives are relevant to the location where the project is sited.

- [NRCS Critical Conservation Areas Resource Concern Priorities](#)
- [EPA Impaired Waterways](#)
- [NRCS & USFWS Working Lands for Wildlife Target Areas](#)
- [NRCS Landscape Conservation Initiatives](#)
- [NRCS National EQIP Initiatives](#)







## PHASE 1

### Develop Continuous Improvement Plan

Continuous Improvement is a core component of the Field to Market approach. A Field to Market Continuous Improvement Plan must be submitted and approved for all Projects. It is recommended that entities desiring to make claims review the requirements as early as possible to assist in determining Continuous Improvement goals and target metrics, and to build a strong Project foundation. Even in cases where a project does not foresee filing an impact claim, continuous improvement goals and regional natural resource concerns are to be considered.

Organizations that already have a comprehensive Plan detailed for their Project can submit it to Field to Market along with a completed Continuous Improvement Plan Form that references the broader plan. For organizations that do not have a plan, the Continuous Improvement Plan Form can be used as a development guide. The form asks questions related to the identification of regional natural resource concerns, continuous improvement goals, mechanisms identified for achieving continuous improvement goals, and best management practices that are being promoted by the Project.

**Sustainability Indicators:** Projects target improvement in at least one of Field to Market's eight sustainability indicators. These indicators are biodiversity, energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, irrigation water use, land use, soil carbon, soil conservation, and water quality.

The selection of sustainability indicators should align to the relevant natural resource concerns identified within the project geography. Below are examples of natural resource concerns and the associated sustainability indicators are

#### CLIMATE CHANGE



Greenhouse Gas Emissions,  
Energy Use, & Soil Carbon

#### ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION



Land Use & Biodiversity

#### SOIL HEALTH/QUALITY



Soil Carbon & Soil Conservation

#### WATER SCARCITY



Irrigation Water Use

#### WATER QUALITY



Water Quality & Soil Conservation



**Objective(s) & Baseline(s):** Projects define the near-term scope with at least one timebound, measurable objective and clearly establish the baseline against which the project will evaluate success publicly. Depending on project pathway, these objectives focus on engagement, adoption and/or impact.

Determining baselines for progress reporting. Baselines can be established through surveys, outreach to local technical assistance organizations or aggregators, and/or baseline measurement within the Fieldprint Platform for the first year of data collection.

**Relevant Management Practices:** Projects consider what suite of locally relevant practices can contribute solutions to pressing natural resource concerns in the region before developing supporting continuous improvement strategies. Through the Partnership Exchange you can explore the variety of support available from across the Field to Market for selection of management practices, tools and resources.

- That agronomic and engineering technical assistance available regionally from Field to Market civil society and agribusiness members.
- Tools and products allow projects to view those inputs, technologies or other products which have been developed by Field to Market agribusiness members and peer-reviewed to prove they can improve sustainability outcomes

**Continuous Improvement Strategies and Activities:** Projects' continuous improvement strategies and activities 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.



**Acreage Enrollment:** Projects define and report the acreage enrollment methodology that is used. At a minimum, projects must require each grower to enter data for a minimum of 10% of the acres into the Fieldprint Platform in order to be enrolled in the project for a specific crop. Higher percentages lead to more exact results and projects are encouraged to enter data for a larger percent of acreage where feasible. Transparency in the overall enrollment approach is required, including methods employed to ensure the acreage for which data is being entered is representative of the total acreage enrolled.

Field to Market recommends randomized initial field selection while considering variations in soils; management- field size, tillage, and conservation practices; fertility; and geographic location. Once chosen, data should be collected from the same fields over time to allow for comparisons over time and, where desired, impact claims.



## PHASE 2

### Implement & Evaluate Progress

Annual Reports must be submitted during the reporting period (January 1 through April 30) to maintain an Active Project registration on the public-facing Project Directory. Please note that delinquent reporting will result in the public-facing status being changed to reflect non-conformity (Suspended). The information provided in your annual report will serve as a public-facing report on progress achieved against your project's continuous improvement goal(s) and objectives.

Timely and accurate reporting ensures that your organization can credibly demonstrate your efforts to accelerate continuous improvement and support Field to Market in demonstrating the collective impact of all members in driving sustainable agriculture forward.

**Implementation:** Projects implement continuous improvement strategies and activities to deliver against the measurable, timebound objective(s) outlined in their Continuous Improvement Plan. The Partnership Exchange allows members to highlight implementation support capabilities and expertise available.

The Fieldprint® Platform is a pioneering assessment framework that empowers farmers, suppliers, brands and retailers at every stage in their sustainability journey, to measure the environmental impacts of commodity crop production and identify opportunities for continuous improvement. Specifically, the Fieldprint Platform allows farmers to estimate their field-scale performance and anonymously compare their performance against their peers participating in the same Project.

Farmers can access this free and confidential tool through Field to Market's online Fieldprint Platform or their sustainability performance can be evaluated utilizing associated farm-management software that connect to the Fieldprint Platform. To learn more about which tools utilize the industry's most accepted and recognized sustainability measurement framework, please refer to Field to Market's list of Qualified Data Management Partners at [www.fieldtomarket.org/platform](http://www.fieldtomarket.org/platform).

The Fieldprint Platform analyzes and transforms a farmer's management information into a Fieldprint® Analysis shown above plots the sustainability performance for a farmer's selected field. Lower values closer to the center of the spider diagram indicate greater sustainability performance or resource use efficiency. Generally, if the farmer's analysis extends beyond the state or national benchmarks, this is an opportunity for improvement and important area to consider in the next growing season.

Fieldprint Analysis, which visually represents the sustainability performance and operational efficiency of a farmer's unique operation. The Platform uses datasets and methodologies developed by multiple sources, including the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

**Aggregate Results:** Projects provide aggregate results for all Field to Market sustainability metrics to Project Sponsors on an annual basis.

**Annual Reporting:** Projects track and report progress annually against the Continuous Improvement Plan, submitting an Annual Report by April 30 for each year the project is active. All Annual Reports will become visible on the public-facing Project Directory after they have been reviewed and approved by Field to Market staff. 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 objective progress.



**Grower Engagement:** Projects 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. Field to Market has developed a series of [fact sheets](#) to assist farmers and advisers identify opportunities to improve sustainability results.



**Adaptive Management:** Projects are encouraged to adapt their approach to advancing continuous improvement if the annual review highlights current strategies and activities are ineffective in delivering progress against the measurable, timebound objective(s). Based on the performance of our legacy Continuous Improvement Projects, Field to Market identifies the following adaptive management techniques that build on the importance of collaborations, measurement, and feedback (Figure 2).

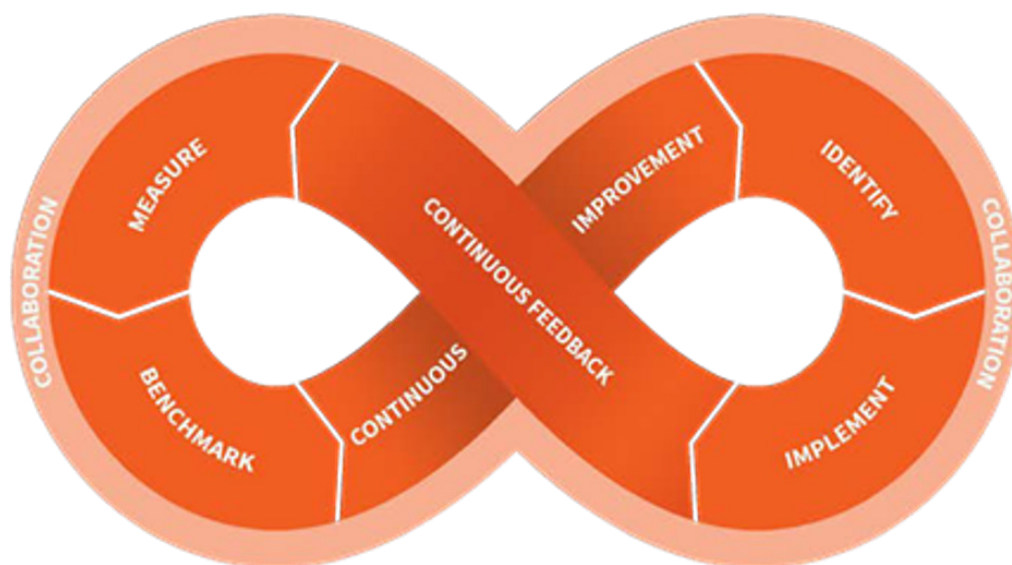


FIGURE 2

As a project, evaluate what worked well, while also documenting lessons learned on less effective approaches to improve understanding and continue to engage and share feedback with participating farmers before next growing season.





### PHASE 3

## Document Project-Level Improvements

Our goal is to support you in communicating the efforts you have taken to support farmers in accelerating continuous improvement in the targeted sustainability outcome and to create an authentic conversation to better inform stakeholders on the challenges and successes in advancing sustainable agriculture.

**Evaluation:** Projects evaluate how their engagement supports farmers in pursuing improvement in the targeted sustainability outcome by comparing results against established project baseline(s).

**Result(s) Sharing:** Upon project completion, each project publicly shares a project level evaluation demonstrating how the project has supported farmers in pursuing continuous improvement, such as:

- Engagement of targeted acres or number of growers demonstrating continuous improvement within a given geography or focused on a specific natural resource concern;
- Percentage increase of grower population adopting conservation delivery solutions and/or identified conservation practices compared to project baseline(s);
- Downstream customer visibility into commodity crop sourcing for a targeted volume of supply; or
- Establishment of a baseline against which improvements in environmental outcomes could be quantified through transitioning to an Innovation Project.



### PHASE 4

### OPTIONAL

## Demonstrate Project-Level Sustainability Impact

This phase goes beyond documenting accelerated practice adoption to analyzing the efficacy of continuous improvement strategies by assessing quantified improvements in sustainability outcomes over time. If you wish to quantify change over time in accordance with Field to Market's Impact Claims Protocol or pursue additional pathways Field to Market has enabled that align with Scope 3 emissions reporting and/or ecosystem services markets, please provide a narrative description and accompanying spreadsheet to quantify impact.

**Impact Claim:** Projects may pursue an Impact Claim, quantifying change over time, by utilizing the Impact Claim Protocol. If a Project is not registered from inception as an Innovation Project, it can build on an established data set from an Insight Project by collecting additional years of data. It can then analyze the impact of the selected value-added incentives and continuous improvement strategies utilized to drive improvements in targeted sustainability outcomes.

Projects are eligible to make an Impact Claim if the project data supports quantified improvements over time.





**Verification:** 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 only at the point where an impact claim is verified.

**Harmonization and Alignment:** Projects that pursue this phase are eligible to access harmonization and alignment established with initiatives focused on Scope 3 verification and credit-based ecosystem service markets.



## INNOVATION PROJECTS

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 0

#### Define Project Intent & Scope

The scoping stage 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 should be established to complete project registration:

- Specific sustainability challenges and natural resource concerns addressed within selected project geography
- Goals and objectives
- Grower engagement plan
- Potential Project Sponsors, Partners, and participating farmers identified to reach the multi-stakeholder participation
- Fieldprint Platform Access — online or through a Qualified Data Management Partner

Projects can take many various pathways and the scope varies. For example, a Project could be geographical in scope (e.g. focusing on a priority watershed or area), crop-focused (e.g. an ingredient in the Project Sponsor's supply chain), or outcome-focused (e.g. measuring the impacts of a best management practice in a targeted area or group). Additionally, they can be tied to a production volume that requires an associated accounting system or may not involve volume tracking.

It is critical to identify the scope early on to organize an approach to exploratory questions. For example, a geographic approach could include consulting the local Soil and Water Conservation District or other local conservation organization to learn about priority issues, obtaining water quality data from state agency data, or meeting with the Farm Bureau or local NRCS to learn about what is happening on the ground and potential avenues to pursue to generate interest and engagement in the Project.



Project Sponsors are encouraged to avail themselves of Field to Market staff when thinking through Project goals and objectives. Field to Market support can take many different forms, such as an informal phone conversation to discuss ideas, an individual or small group goal-setting exercise, or a facilitated meeting or conference call to draw out interests and values and determine common goals.

**Geographic Scope:** While all projects focus on a state level at minimum, it is encouraged that projects examine boundaries at a sub-state level, either grouping at counties, watersheds or supply sheds.

**Crops:** Projects identify and focus on at least one of the crops within Field to Market's program. The current crops that are:



**Natural Resource Concern:** Projects identify at least one natural resource concern that the project's continuous improvement objective(s) will address relevant to pressing local conservation priorities in the project region and/or global sustainable development priorities and select at least one corresponding Field to Market metric.

Our approach allows organizations across the food and agriculture value chain to substantively contribute to the global goals through their participation in Field to Market. We have [mapped](#) how our efforts to scale sustainable agriculture in the United States contribute to this sustainable development agenda, and we remain committed to advancing solutions to pressing global challenges.

Key natural resource concerns can be identified through a variety of sources, including local conservation organizations or national designations. We encourage you to review the following national resources and contact expert local organizations to ensure your project's continuous improvement goal(s) and objectives are relevant to the location where the project is sited.

- [NRCS Critical Conservation Areas Resource Concern Priorities](#)
- [EPA Impaired Waterways](#)
- [NRCS & USFWS Working Lands for Wildlife Target Areas](#)
- [NRCS Landscape Conservation Initiatives](#)
- [NRCS National EQIP Initiatives](#)

For Projects that are interested in using sampling consult [Field to Market's Sampling Framework](#).



## PHASE 1

### Develop Continuous Improvement Plan

Continuous Improvement is a core component of the Field to Market approach. A Field to Market Continuous Improvement Plan must be submitted and approved for all Projects. It is recommended that entities desiring to make claims review the requirements as early as possible to assist in determining Continuous Improvement goals and target metrics, and to build a strong Project foundation. Even in cases where a project does not foresee filing an impact claim, continuous improvement goals and regional natural resource concerns are to be considered.

Organizations that already have a comprehensive Plan detailed for their Project can submit it to Field to Market along with a completed Continuous Improvement Plan Form that references the broader plan. For organizations that do not have a plan, the Continuous Improvement Plan Form can be used as a development guide. The form asks questions related to the identification of regional natural resource concerns, continuous improvement goals, mechanisms identified for achieving continuous improvement goals, and best management practices that are being promoted by the Project.

**Sustainability Indicators:** Projects target improvement in at least one of Field to Market's eight sustainability indicators. These indicators are biodiversity, energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, irrigation water use, land use, soil carbon, soil conservation, and water quality.

The selection of sustainability indicators should align to the relevant natural resource concerns identified within the project geography. Below are examples of natural resource concerns and the associated sustainability indicators are

#### CLIMATE CHANGE



Greenhouse Gas Emissions,  
Energy Use, & Soil Carbon

#### ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION



Land Use & Biodiversity

#### SOIL HEALTH/QUALITY



Soil Carbon & Soil Conservation

#### WATER SCARCITY



Irrigation Water Use

#### WATER QUALITY



Water Quality & Soil Conservation



**Objective(s) & Baseline(s):** Projects define the near-term scope with at least one timebound, measurable objective and clearly establish the baseline against which the project will evaluate success publicly. Depending on project pathway, these objectives focus on engagement, adoption and/or impact.

Determining baselines for progress reporting. Baselines can be established through surveys, outreach to local technical assistance organizations or aggregators, and/or baseline measurement within the Fieldprint Platform for the first year of data collection.

**Relevant Management Practices:** Projects consider what suite of locally relevant practices can contribute solutions to pressing natural resource concerns in the region before developing supporting continuous improvement strategies. Through the Partnership Exchange you can explore the variety of support available from across the Field to Market for selection of management practices, tools and resources.

- That agronomic and engineering technical assistance available regionally from Field to Market civil society and agribusiness members.
- Tools and products allow projects to view those inputs, technologies or other products which have been developed by Field to Market agribusiness members and peer-reviewed to prove they can improve sustainability outcomes



**Continuous Improvement Strategies and Activities:** Projects' continuous improvement strategies and activities focus on providing participating farmers with a lasting, tangible resource or practice change to pursue opportunities for improved sustainability outcomes. Unlike other project pathways, the provision of this information is an explicit requirement for Innovation Projects.

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. Practice changes include financial and/or technical assistance with the implementation of conservation practices such as planting pollinator habitat or using cover crops.

In the Value-Added Incentives White Paper, we explore opportunities to equip farmers with resources and incentives needed to overcome common challenges and barriers to adopting new practices or changing their management system, such as: lack of information and technical assistance, additional time requirements, capital investment required to adopt a new practice, the time horizon for the return on investment, and other constraints that inhibit the farmer from doing what is needed.



These include:

- **Financial Incentives** through grant, loan, and lease programs that provide cost-share funding for or reduce expenses of conservation practice implementation;
- **Technical Assistance** including advice, hands-on help, and training on conservation tools, practices, techniques, and management decisions;
- **Leveraging Field to Market equivalency agreements** to facilitate market access for farmers who are undertaking sustainability actions;
- **Helping farmers gain regulatory certainty or access public funds** for demonstrating sustainability actions through federal, state, or local level Policy support and agreements;
- **Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES)** offering financial payments to farmers or landowners in exchange for managing their land to provide some sort of ecological service, which is also known as payments for environmental services or benefits; and
- **Recognition** of farmers undertaking sustainability actions.

**Acreage Enrollment:** Projects define and report the acreage enrollment methodology that is used. At a minimum, projects must require each grower to enter data for a minimum of 10% of the acres into the Fieldprint Platform in order to be enrolled in the project for a specific crop. Higher percentages lead to more exact results and projects are encouraged to enter data for a larger percent of acreage where feasible. Transparency in the overall enrollment approach is required, including methods employed to ensure the acreage for which data is being entered is representative of the total acreage enrolled.

Field to Market recommends randomized initial field selection while considering variations in soils; management- field size, tillage, and conservation practices; fertility; and geographic location. Once chosen, data should be collected from the same fields over time to allow for comparisons over time and, where desired, impact claims.



## PHASE 2

### Implement & Evaluate Progress

Annual Reports must be submitted during the reporting period (January 1 through April 30) to maintain an Active Project registration on the public-facing Project Directory. Please note that delinquent reporting will result in the public-facing status being changed to reflect non-conformity (Suspended). The information provided in your annual report will serve as a public-facing report on progress achieved against your project's continuous improvement goal(s) and objectives.

Timely and accurate reporting ensures that your organization can credibly demonstrate your efforts to accelerate continuous improvement and support Field to Market in demonstrating the collective impact of all members in driving sustainable agriculture forward.

**Implementation:** Projects implement continuous improvement strategies and activities to deliver against the measurable, timebound objective(s) outlined in their Continuous Improvement Plan. The Partnership Exchange allows members to highlight implementation support capabilities and expertise available.

Projects 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 additional years to an existing Insight Project.





The Fieldprint® Platform is a pioneering assessment framework that empowers farmers, suppliers, brands and retailers at every stage in their sustainability journey, to measure the environmental impacts of commodity crop production and identify opportunities for continuous improvement. Specifically, the Fieldprint Platform allows farmers to estimate their field-scale performance and anonymously compare their performance against their peers participating in the same Project.

Farmers can access this free and confidential tool through Field to Market's online Fieldprint Platform or their sustainability performance can be evaluated utilizing associated farm-management software that connect to the Fieldprint Platform. To learn more about which tools utilize the industry's most accepted and recognized sustainability measurement framework, please refer to Field to Market's list of Qualified Data Management Partners at [www.fieldtomarket.org/platform](http://www.fieldtomarket.org/platform).

The Fieldprint Platform analyzes and transforms a farmer's management information into a Fieldprint® Analysis shown above plots the sustainability performance for a farmer's selected field. Lower values closer to the center of the spider diagram indicate greater sustainability performance or resource use efficiency. Generally, if the farmer's analysis extends beyond the state or national benchmarks, this is an opportunity for improvement and important area to consider in the next growing season.

Fieldprint Analysis, which visually represents the sustainability performance and operational efficiency of a farmer's unique operation. The Platform uses datasets and methodologies developed by multiple sources, including the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

**Aggregate Results:** Projects provide aggregate results for all Field to Market sustainability metrics to Project Sponsors and Partners on an annual basis.

**Annual Reporting:** Projects track and report progress annually against the Continuous Improvement Plan, submitting an Annual Report by April 30 for each year the project is active. All Annual Reports will become visible on the public-facing Project Directory after they have been reviewed and approved by Field to Market staff. 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 objective progress.

Innovation Projects that file annual reports are eligible to make adoption claims (e.g., percentage increase in conservation practice adoption).





**Grower Engagement:** Projects offer actionable sustainability insights and ongoing tangible support to participating growers on an annual basis, delivering knowledge and analysis to assist farmers in pursuing increased adoption of practices to deliver improved sustainability outcomes.

Field to Market developed a series of fact sheets to assist farmers and advisers identify opportunities to improve sustainability results.

**Adaptive Management:** Projects are encouraged to adapt their approach to advancing continuous improvement if the annual review highlights current strategies and activities are ineffective in delivering progress against the measurable, timebound objective(s). Based on the performance of our legacy Continuous Improvement Projects, Field to Market identifies the following adaptive management techniques that build on the importance of collaborations, measurement, and feedback (Figure 3).

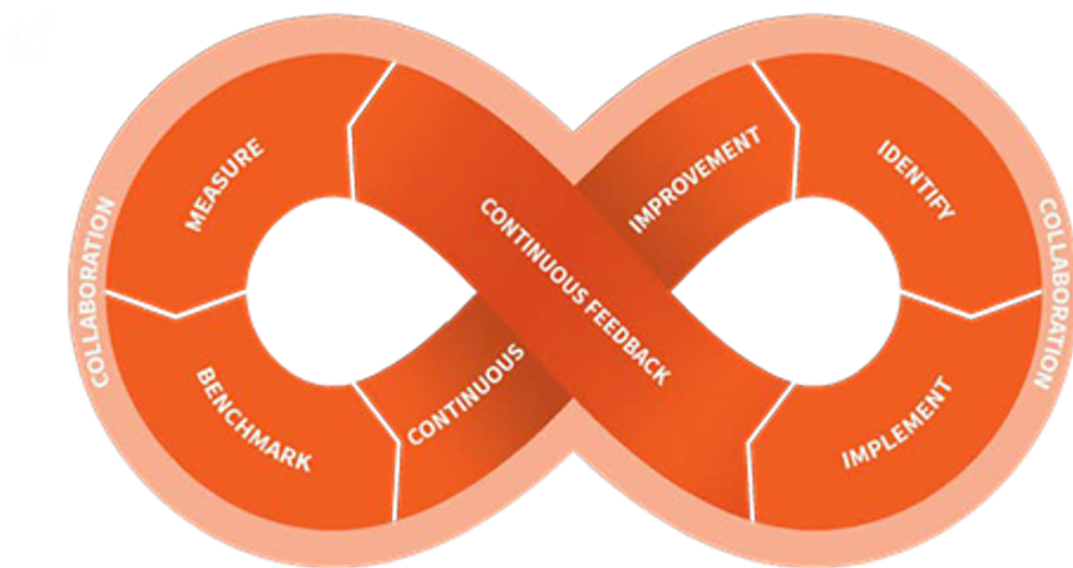


FIGURE 3

As a project, evaluate what worked well, while also documenting lessons learned on less effective approaches to improve understanding and continue to engage and share feedback with participating farmers before next growing season.



### PHASE 3

## Document Project-Level Improvements

Our goal is to support you in communicating the efforts you have taken to support farmers in accelerating continuous improvement in the targeted sustainability outcome and to create an authentic conversation to better inform stakeholders on the challenges and successes in advancing sustainable agriculture.

**Evaluation:** Projects evaluate how their engagement supports farmers in pursuing improvement in the targeted sustainability outcome by comparing results against established project baseline(s).



**Result(s) Sharing:** Upon project completion, each project publicly shares a project level evaluation demonstrating how the project has supported farmers in pursuing continuous improvement, such as:

- Engagement of targeted acres or number of growers demonstrating continuous improvement within a given geography or focused on a specific natural resource concern;
- Percentage increase of grower population adopting conservation delivery solutions and/or identified conservation practices compared to project baseline(s);
- Downstream customer visibility into commodity crop sourcing for a targeted volume of supply;
- Establishment of a baseline against which improvements in environmental outcomes could be quantified through transitioning to an Innovation Project; or
- Efficacy of the Project's strategy for driving accelerated practice adoption.



#### PHASE 4

#### OPTIONAL

### Demonstrate Project-Level Sustainability Impact

This phase goes beyond documenting accelerated practice adoption to analyzing the efficacy of continuous improvement strategies by assessing quantified improvements in sustainability outcomes over time. If you wish to quantify change over time in accordance with Field to Market's Impact Claims Protocol or pursue additional pathways Field to Market has enabled that align with Scope 3 emissions reporting and/or ecosystem services markets, please provide a narrative description and accompanying spreadsheet to quantify impact.

**Impact Claim:** Projects may pursue an Impact Claim, quantifying change over time, by utilizing the Impact Claim Protocol. If a Project is not registered from inception as an Innovation Project, it can build on an established data set from an Insight Project by collecting additional years of data. It can then analyze the impact of the selected value-added incentives and continuous improvement strategies utilized to drive improvements in targeted sustainability outcomes.

Projects are eligible to make an Impact Claim if the project data supports quantified improvements over time.

Any Innovation Project that has completed this assessment and successfully makes an Impact Claim will receive a status showing that Impact has been Verified on the public-facing Project Directory.

**Verification:** 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 only at the point where an impact claim is verified.

**Harmonization and Alignment:** Projects that pursue this phase are eligible to access harmonization and alignment established with initiatives focused on Scope 3 verification and credit-based ecosystem service markets.