



**Field to Market<sup>®</sup>**  
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT  
**ACCELERATOR**



*DRIVING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE FORWARD*

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## **DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT PATHWAYS**

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## Flexible Project Pathways

*The flexible project pathways under the Continuous Improvement Accelerator seek to reinforce three important needs we heard in the Strategic Planning Process:*

- **FLEXIBILITY** – Field to Market must meet companies, organizations and farmers where they are—recognizing and supporting different starting points in their respective sustainability journeys
- **RECOGNITION** – Field to Market needs to offer additional recognition for members that are providing supplemental investment in grower support and continuous improvement strategies as well as members that are preparing farmers through outreach and education to engage in sustainability measurement
- **FOCUS ON IMPROVEMENT & IMPACT** – Field to Market needs to create a clear programmatic framework and process-based standard that connects member efforts to catalyze continuous improvement and offers transparent opportunities to demonstrate impact



## Pathways for Continuous Improvement

*Our Continuous Improvement Accelerator supports members in designing and implementing three types of continuous improvement projects, enabling multiple pathways to help farmers and the value chain achieve specific milestones on their respective sustainability journeys.*



### INCUBATION

*Creates enabling conditions by engaging with farmers on the connection between practices and at least one sustainability indicator*



### INSIGHT

*Offers sustainability insights for farmers and transparency for value chain partners through measurement*



### INNOVATION

*Provides tangible support for farmers in accelerating adoption of practices that deliver improved sustainability outcomes consistent with public Project goals*

*Collectively, each project type aims to help farmers and the value chain advance their journey of continuous improvement and achieve enhanced sustainability performance that delivers improved environmental outcomes.*



## INCUBATION

*Creates enabling conditions by engaging with farmers on the connection between practices and at least one sustainability indicator*

- *Focuses on farmer outreach and education related to farmer strategies that drive improvements in at least one sustainability outcome relevant to Field to Market*
- *Measurement utilizing the Fieldprint Platform is not required, only broader education on Field to Market's sustainability metrics*
- *Minimum of a one-year engagement serving to connect a farmer's current management, conservation and stewardship practices to at least one improved sustainability outcome*
- *Objectives captured in a Continuous Improvement Plan that is made publicly available and progress reported annually*
- *Creates an on-ramp for participating farmers to engage in Insights or Innovation projects in the future by preparing farmers to engage in assessing how their management practices impact different sustainability outcomes*



## INCUBATION

### ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

- *Conservation District establishes an Incubation Project with a goal of helping 30 participating farmers develop conservation plans with a special emphasis on soil conservation.*
- *Conservation organization establishes an Incubation Project with a goal of supporting 40 participating farmers in an increased understanding of 4R practices through the development of nutrient management plans to improve water quality outcomes.*
- *Agribusiness company establishes an Incubation Project with a goal of supporting 100 farmers to develop an increased understanding of improving soil carbon through completing soil testing and analysis to optimize fertility.*
- *Brand or retail company establishes an Incubation Project in their supply chain with a goal of 30 farmers adopting soil moisture sensors and irrigation efficiency technology to achieve water savings from a sourcing region.*



## INSIGHT

*Offers sustainability insights for farmers and transparency for supply chain partners through measurement*

- *Most closely mirrors existing Field to Market projects with a core objective of improving transparency into the sustainability performance for farmers, supply chains and other stakeholders*
- *Focuses on delivering knowledge and analysis that can support sustainability outcomes for the cropping system, while improving transparency for supply chains*
- *Offers a deeper level of engagement for farmers through measuring and benchmarking performance across all eight Field to Market sustainability metrics*
- *Objectives captured in a Continuous Improvement Plan that is made publicly available and progress reported annually*
- *Communicates efforts to increase farmers' knowledge and learning around sustainability outcomes in addition to enabling business to business reporting on aggregate metric outcomes*



## INSIGHT

### ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

- *Grain aggregator establishes an Insights Project that uses the Fieldprint Platform for peer-to-peer learning for farmers in their mill shed, as well as aggregating those results for a downstream customer.*
- *Grower group establishes an Insights Project through a Regional Conservation Partnership Program that utilizes the Fieldprint Platform to measure sustainability outcomes of the RCPP and provides ranking points for federal financial assistance for using the Platform to document stewardship.*
- *Ag retailer or certified crop adviser establishes an Insights Project that uses the Fieldprint Platform to document and demonstrate the results of the sustainability advice given to farmer clientele.*
- *University Extension establishes an Insights Project that utilizes the Fieldprint Platform to document and demonstrate sustainability results alongside agronomic research and/or economic analysis.*
- *Ag tech provider establishes an Insights Project to support 50 participating farmers in documenting and demonstrating sustainability performance through the Fieldprint Platform and capturing the impact of the sustainability and agronomic advice offered to their farmer clientele.*



## INNOVATION

*Provides tangible support for farmers in accelerating adoption of practices that deliver improved sustainability outcomes consistent with public Project goals*

- Focuses on providing tangible support to farmers in adopting conservation practices that can drive improvements in environmental outcomes while documenting progress through the Fieldprint Platform*
- Objectives captured in a Continuous Improvement Plan that is made publicly available and progress reported annually*
- The Plan must document the key strategies the project will use to support farmers in pursuing increased adoption (i.e., technical assistance, cost-sharing or other value-added incentives)*
- By transparently reporting progress against objectives and activities completed against the Plan, Innovation Projects will be able to make additional claims on credible project attributes (e.g. percentage increase in practice adoption), in addition to being eligible to make Measurement and Impact Claims*





## INNOVATION

### ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

- *Food & beverage brand establishes an Innovation Project to provide cost-share for cover crop adoption and utilizes the Fieldprint Platform to document improved environmental outcomes and demonstrate responsible sourcing.*
- *Conservation District establishes an Innovation Project with a goal of providing support to 40 growers in writing conservation plans to address local resource concerns while utilizing the Fieldprint Platform to document improved environmental outcomes.*
- *Apparel brand establishes an Innovation Project to provide cost-share for irrigation efficiency technology and utilizes the Fieldprint Platform to document improved environmental outcomes and demonstrate responsible sourcing.*
- *Grain aggregator and food company work together to establish an Innovation Project that utilizes an ecosystem service market to incentivize reduced greenhouse gas emissions while utilizing the Fieldprint Platform to document improved environmental outcomes.*
- *Ag retailer or certified crop adviser establishes an Innovation Project that uses the Fieldprint Platform to document and demonstrate sustainability outcomes from agronomic recommendations given to farmer clientele related to a specific practice.*

## Continuous Improvement Plan

- *Based on Board and Member Feedback, all projects will simplify planning through a single Continuous Improvement Plan, which will guide project objectives and activities*
- *Describes how the project will advance continuous improvement through selected project pathway*
- *Addresses how the project will contribute solutions to key natural resource concerns*
- *Identifies how the project will recruit, engage and retain participating farmers by providing valuable feedback*
- *OPTIONAL: Outlines value-added incentives the project will employ to support farmers in accelerating adoption of conservation practices to improve sustainability outcomes (required for Innovation Projects)*



## Requirements & Claims Eligibility by Project Type

Project Registration & Reporting Requirements	Incubation	Insight	Innovation
<b>Project Registration</b> <i>(Reviewed &amp; Published to Project Directory)</i>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Continuous Improvement Plan</b> <i>(Reviewed &amp; Published to Project Directory)</i>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Annual Reporting on Progress/Activities Completed for Plan(s)</b> <i>(Reviewed &amp; Published to Project Directory)</i>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Annual Aggregate Reporting of Metric Outcomes</b> <i>(Filed with Field to Market and made available upon request to support Impact Claim)</i>	No	No	✓
Claims Eligibility	Incubation	Insight	Innovation
<b>Project Participation Claims</b> <i>(Project intent &amp; number of growers and acres enrolled)</i>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Adoption Claims</b> <i>(Measuring adoption of continuous improvement strategies by participating farmers)</i>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Measurement Claims</b> <i>(Aggregate metric outcomes)</i>	No	✓	✓
<b>Trends Claims</b> <i>(Interim directional improvement in metric outcomes)</i>	No	✓	✓
<b>Impact Claims</b> <i>(Improvement in metric outcomes over time)</i>	No	✓	✓

Under the Board's guidance, the Verification Committee will be responsible for refining Field to Market's verification protocols and requirements to respond to membership's desire for expanded flexibility in claims and verification, while ensuring credible communications. The above chart seeks to outline anticipated revisions that will support a public-facing project directory. By enabling projects to offer transparency about whether the information supplied is self-reported, 2<sup>nd</sup>-party verified or 3<sup>rd</sup>-party verified, Field to Market's role can focus on providing a process-based standard for engaging farmers through projects and offering guidance on best practices for project implementation and assurance.

# Flexible Project Framework

## CLAIMS & ASSURANCE FOR MEMBER-DRIVEN PROJECTS

*Responding to broader requests from membership for expanded flexibility in claims and verification, while ensuring credible communications, Field to Market is making an important shift that is only possible through increased transparency. To offer more flexible verification and claims pathways for member-driven projects, Field to Market will host a project directory that makes a project summary publicly available to interested stakeholders, including any relevant information about how the project is making progress against the learning and/or performance objectives published in their Continuous Improvement Plan, including statistics on the numbers of acres and growers enrolled in the project.*

*The Verification Committee will develop a set of assurance principles that outlines the requirements for the level of assurance accepted for each project type in both project reporting and the process for making and verifying claims.*

*Based on the level of assurance sought by the project, the directory will indicate whether the data provided in the project's annual report is self-reported, second-party, or third-party verified. This results in a more flexible approach to verification and claims, by allowing projects to select the level of risk that they feel is most appropriate, while acknowledging that Field to Market has provided guidance on best practice in assurance for each type of claim.*

## Flexible Project Framework

### CLAIMS & ASSURANCE FOR MEMBER-DRIVEN PROJECTS (Cont.)

*For instance, project participation claims around number of growers and acres is relatively low-risk given the appropriate safeguards and could be either self-reported or second-party verified. Additional levels of assurance may be advisable for claims around metric outcomes, increased practice adoption and demonstrated impact (also known as Measurement, Credible Project Attribute and/or Impact Claims).*

*The Assurance Principles would provide guidance for helping members layer on additional levels of assurance to manage the level of associated risk they are taking on in making the claim. For instance, if a member is using third-party verification for other aspects of their program, the principles will offer guidance on how to include Field to Market's recommended principles within the scope of that verification (e.g., members or qualified data management partners that already undergo a third-party audit of data for corporate sustainability reporting or other purposes).*

***By increasing transparency and allowing members to self-determine the level of risk they are most comfortable with assuming, more flexible verification and claims pathways can be offered by Field to Market. As a result, Field to Market's role is focused on providing a common framework advancing continuous improvement through a process-based standard rather than policing or validating member claims.***