

 **Board of Directors | Meeting Minutes**

May 18, 2021
*Conference Call*

**Directors Present**

Jenny Ahlen, Environmental Defense Fund; Sarah Alexander, Keystone Policy Center; David Bue, Pheasants Forever; Luisa Camargo, Mondelez; Sarah Fox, Nutrien; Keira Franz, National Association of Wheat Growers; Michelle French, ADM; Margaret Henry, PepsiCo; Diane Herndon, Nestle Purina; Brandon Hunnicutt, National Corn Growers Association; Gary O’Neill, USDA NRCS; Jeremy Peters, National Association of Conservation Districts; Megan Weidner, Bunge; Jun Zhu, University of Arkansas

**Staff and Consultants**

Rod Snyder, Field to Market; Betsy Hickman, Field to Market; Allison Thomson, Field to Market; Jamie Richards, Field to Market; Ray Stewart, Thomson Coburn; Meredith Rynkiewicz, DCRLS; David Beaudreau, DCRLS; Simi Olabisi, UHY; Omar Bahammou, UHY

Motions

* *A motion was made by Jeremy Peters and seconded by Michelle French to approve the consent agenda. Motion passed unanimously.*
* *A motion was made by Jeremy Peters and seconded by Michelle French to approve the reallocation of $45,000 from meetings and events and $25,000 from staff travel account lines to cover additional digital communications expenses for FY 2021. Motion passed unanimously.*
* *A motion was made Michelle French and seconded by Luisa Camargo to approve the FY 2020 audit. Motion passed unanimously.*
* *A motion was made by Michelle French and seconded by Sarah Fox to adjourn the meeting at 4:03 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.*

Next Steps and Action Items

* *The Board requested additional planning and discussion to properly reflect digital communication needs for the FY 2022 budget process.*
* *If Board members have any recommendations for the upcoming Science Advisory Council vacancy, names for consideration should be sent to Allison or Rod by June 18 for appointment during the August Board of Directors call.*

Proceedings

**Opening**

Board Chair, Brandon Hunnicutt called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. Ray Stewart read the antitrust statement. Brandon reviewed old business from the March Board meeting.

**Consent Agenda**

The consent agenda included review and approval of the meeting minutes from March and approval of one new member application.

New Member Application

* MANRRS (Affiliate)

*A motion was made by Jeremy Peters and seconded by Michelle French to approve the consent agenda. Motion passed unanimously.*

**Finance, Operations and Membership Updates**

Finance

Rod Snyder reviewed the financial statements through March 31 and reported cash on hand of $1,040,650 with revenue at $1,202,185 and expenses of $667,207. He reviewed the status of the second draw PPP loan and noted that Field to Market had signed a supplemental SOW with the accounting firm Marcum to assist in the recordkeeping needed for the forgiveness application.

Rod introduced the Board to the two summer interns:

* Helen VanBeck, Communications
* Jessica Schultz, Sustainable Agriculture

Rod also reviewed the ongoing grant work with DC Legislative & Regulatory Services and introduced Meredith Rynkiewicz and David Beaudreau. Ongoing updates regarding grant applications and funding will be provided to the Board throughout the year.

Lastly, Rod discussed a proposed budget reallocation request to transfer $70,000 of unused funds from meetings and staff travel to cover additional digital communications needs for 2021. The Board discussed if these were one-time costs or if they would need to be considered for future budget planning.

*Action item: The Board requested additional planning and discussion to properly reflect digital communication needs for the FY 2022 budget process.*

*A motion was made by Jeremy Peters and seconded by Michelle French to approve the reallocation of $45,000 from meetings and events and $25,000 from staff travel account lines to cover additional digital communications expenses for FY 2021. Motion passed unanimously.*

Review and Approval of FY 2020 Audit

Representatives from the audit firm UHY presented the audit report and referred to the prepared audited financial statements. UHY issued a clean unmodified opinion on Field to Market’s FY 2020 financials and reviewed the process and required communications to complete the audit. Simi Olabisi reported on adjustments made to the FY 2020 financials including recording the PPP loan as a conditional grant rather than a loan based on late-issued guidance from the Small Business Administration. She noted that revenue in 2020 was comparable year over year to 2019 and expenses were slightly lower due to the COVID-19 pandemic limiting in-person meetings and travel.

*A motion was made Michelle French and seconded by Luisa Camargo to approve the FY 2020 audit. Motion passed unanimously.*

**Strategic Plan Development for 2022-2024**

Rod reviewed the strategic planning process thus far and the need to identify Field to Market’s overall positioning in an increasingly competitive ag sustainability landscape. He thanked the Board for its ongoing leadership and participation in this process

Betsy Hickman reviewed the results from the Engine of Impact survey, as well as key organizational strengths and weaknesses we should consider as we develop the next strategic plan. She noted that feedback has varied between sectors but there was some alignment on areas needing improvement such as funding challenges when trying to scale the program and overall impact.

The Board discussed tension points between the strategic plan and the related KPIs when measuring success. The Board also asked for the staff to complete the organizational assessment survey to compare results.

The Board noted the changes and external forces impacting Field to Market’s work, as well as the current gaps or needs of the industry that Field to Market might be able to fill in the coming years. An emphasis was placed on the need for the organization to be agile to maintain its leadership position within the industry. The Board also continued its discussion of the new strategies for consideration between now and 2024:

1. **Supply-side Approach**: Field to Market could shift its focus to support upstream entities in creating sustainability projects/programs to strengthen a supply-side approach that focuses most on grower needs and secondarily on standards for downstream brands and retailers. Growing regions could be selected based on priority natural resource concerns.
2. **Expand Applicability of Metrics**: Ensure ubiquity and relevance of Field to Market metrics by aligning with standards that have demonstrated value for growers and the supply chain. Under this scenario, Field to Market would provide the measurement framework alongside other sustainability programs that offer market access, outcomes-based payments, etc.
3. **Establish Clear Criteria or Minimum Standards for Sustainability**: In addition to offering metrics, Field to Market could establish its own minimum standards, performance thresholds or other criteria to provide clearer guidance to the supply chain for sustainable sourcing decisions and public claims.
4. **Create a Learning Laboratory**: Field to Market could play a more proactive role in convening smaller groups of members and project partners to pilot specific strategies, interventions, incentive mechanisms, etc. where the learnings could be more broadly published for the industry.
5. **Promote Data and Technology as a Solution**: Acknowledging that low technology adoption on the farm continues is a barrier to sustainability measurement, Field to market could work with the value chain to increase digital recordkeeping and advance more automated approaches to sustainability measurement and verification.

Following sector calls and continued in-depth interviews with members, staff will present priority options for Board consideration in June and August.

**Strategic Plan Implementation**

*Convene Diverse Stakeholders*

Rod provided additional information about the scheduled House Agriculture Committee Briefing and the Board discussed the opportunity and background information needed for the briefing.

Rod also reviewed the ongoing work of the Racial Justice, Equity and Inclusion Subcommittee.

Brandon shared the upcoming schedule for the June Plenary and General Assembly as well as the next Cross Sector Dialogue. The Board also discussed upcoming standing committee elections, vacancies and process for conducting elections electronically.

*Provide Science-Based Leadership*

Allison Thomson provided updates related to the Fieldprint Platform 4.0 launch as well as STEP for Water Quality and COMET Planner soil carbon scenario tool. She also reviewed the final recommendations for the Metrics Committee’s Pest Management Subgroup:

* Advise against adopting a ninth Field to Market metric associated with a new environmental outcome for pest management
* Modify the biodiversity metric to incorporate more pest management material and update the current pest management question to be more detailed
* All relevant metrics should be evaluated for incorporation of pest management material when they come up for revision
* Assess the feasibility of incorporating a qualitative pest management module to the STEP water quality metric

The Subgroup also provided additional feedback on next steps to include:

* Conduct a gap analysis between what Field to Market offers and what other organizations are doing - Identify opportunities for alignment and/or harmonization for pest management topics
* Survey members from the Brands & Retail Sector who placed the original request about pest management to learn their current positions and needs
* Produce guidance for Field to Market projects that may wish to use an external framework to track improvements in pest management.

Allison also previewed a new Data Analyst training for later in the year, as well as an opening for the Science Advisory Council that will occur this summer. The Board was asked to submit any recommendations for consideration to Allison or Rod by June 18.

*Scale Impact Through Partnership*

Betsy reviewed project statistics based on 2020 annual reporting and reviewed upcoming enhancements to the member portal and project directory, including improved project mapping, project resource sharing options and improved search capabilities. She also noted that staff are working to add geospatial layers to the project directory for improved project design and scoping support.

*Enable Credible Communications*

Due to a shortage of time, Rod referred the Board to the pre-read packet and copy of the presentation slides sent ahead of the meeting for updates and reports related to enabling credible communications and ongoing harmonization and alignment efforts.

The Board reviewed action items and key decisions from the meeting, as well as the upcoming calendar of meetings and events.

*A motion was made by Michelle French and seconded by Sarah Fox to adjourn the meeting at 4:03 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.*