

 **Board of Directors | Meeting Minutes**

August 11, 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; Brandon Hunnicutt, National Corn Growers Association; Mark Isbell, USA Rice Federation; 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; Chisara Ehiemere, Field to Market; Ray Stewart, Thomson Coburn; Meredith Rynkiewicz, DC Legislative and Regulatory Services; David Beaudreau, DC Legislative and Regulatory Services

Motions

* *A motion was made by David Bue and seconded by Keira Franz to approve the consent agenda including standing committee and advisory council appointments and new member Farmers for Sustainable Food. Motion passed unanimously.*
* *A motion was made by Sarah Fox and seconded by David Bue to adjourn the meeting at 3:23 p.m. Motion passed unanimously*

Next Steps and Action Items

* *Revisit standing committee vacancies and consider appointments for unfilled seats until next election cycle.*
* *Consider recommendations for the Strategic Plan including prioritization and additional feedback.*
* *Review travel preferences and restrictions for in-person meetings for the remainder of the calendar year, including for the October Board retreat.*

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 June Board meeting.

**Consent Agenda**

The consent agenda included review and approval of the meeting minutes from June, review and approval of one new member application and the appointment of standing committee co-chairs, vacant committee seats and one new appointment to the Science Advisory Council.

New Member Application

* Farmers for Sustainable Food (Full | Grower)

Standing Committee Co-Chairs

* Awards and Recognition: Aly Wells, Indiana Soybean Alliance (Grower)
* Education and Outreach: Adam Shea, Riceland (Brands & Retail); Michelle Yoshinaka, Sound Agriculture (Agribusiness)
* Metrics: Adam Herges, The Mosaic Company (Agribusiness); Heidi Peterson, Sand County Foundation (Civil Society)
* Verification: Ellen Herbert, Ducks Unlimited (Civil Society); Sally Shaver, National Corn Growers Association (Grower)

Standing Committee Vacancy Appointments

* Education and Outreach: Mark Pryor, The Seam (June 2022); Kira Everhart-Valentin, United Sorghum Checkoff Program (June 2023)

Science Advisory Council Appointment

* Michelle Reba, Research Hydrologist, USDA ARS

*A motion was made by David Bue and seconded by Keira Franz to approve the consent agenda including standing committee and advisory council appointments and new member Farmers for Sustainable Foods. Motion passed unanimously.*

**Finance, Operations and Membership Updates**

Finance

Rod Snyder reviewed the financial statements through June 30 and reported cash on hand of $1,697,173 with revenue at $1,765,950 and expenses of $1,363,895. He discussed the timeline for the PPP loan forgiveness application and projections for the remainder of the fiscal year.

Operations

Rod informed the Board of Chisara Ehiemere’s resignation and the resulting staff vacancy. He noted that the management team is will likely revise the job title and position description for posting later in the fall.

Brandon reviewed the upcoming calendar of events and the Board discussed implications for moving events virtual or keeping them in-person. The Board discussed individual travel restrictions by member companies and personal travel preferences related to the October Board Retreat scheduled in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Considerations for Field to Market Succession Planning

Brandon reviewed the need for the Board to have a succession plan in place and presented the recommendations from the Executive Committee including:

* Hiring an administrative firm to screen applications and facilitate the overall search process
* Forming a search committee within the Board or allowing the Executive Committee to serve that function
* Including the full board in the interviews with finalists
* Ensuring meaningful staff input into the hiring process
* in the event of a vacancy for the position of President, allow the two Vice Presidents to co-lead the alliance until a hire is made

**Review of Verification Committee’s Risk Matrix**

Rod discussed the Verification Committee’s Risk Matrix based on ISEAL Alliance requirements, which was last reviewed in 2020 and is scheduled to be updated every two years. This was initially focused only on assurance, but the Verification Committee expanded to include other considerations.

Key outstanding risks included:

1. Crops will not see continuous improvements – challenges the value of Field to Market
2. Data entered for a crop year are subsequently changed, thereby impacting the overall dataset
	1. Data is purposefully altered by crop advisors to inflate story (conflict of interest)
3. Non-licensee/non-member/member/licensee uses Field to Market data without a valid license
4. Double counting and double claiming concerns which will
5. Grower misunderstandings related to data ownership and use
6. Concern that grower involvement will not reach sufficient levels for program success
7. Projects promote practices that are not a good fit for the regions where they source; interested growers are not in the regions where companies source; limits growth
8. Field to Market is not recognized outside U.S. markets – is leading to commodity-specific approaches to address export markets

**Strategic Plan Development for 2022-2024**

Betsy Hickman provided updates on the in-depth member interviews and feedback from staff and board discussions. Some preliminary findings included:

* Nimbler governance to enable members to focus on topics that are most timely and relevant
* Greater opportunities for shared learning and support for pre-competitive collaboration at a landscape level
* Stronger focus on the necessary enabling conditions for farmers to transition to more sustainable/regenerative production methods

Staff recommended expanding upon Field to Market’s current four strategic pillars to include one new pillar based on feedback received during the strategic planning process.

1. **Convene Diverse Stakeholders** -Convene diverse stakeholders to facilitate multi-sector collaboration, advance shared learning, and drive collective action in accelerating sustainable outcomes for nature and farmers.
2. **Provide Science-Based Leadership** -Develop and strengthen Field to Market’s science-and outcomes-based resources for measuring sustainability performance, assessing opportunities for improvement and bridging environmental and social science to catalyze positive change.
3. **Identify and Promote Innovative Incentive Strategies (*New*)** –Strengthen capacity across the value chain to deploy effective incentive strategies to support farmers in scaling conservation adoption by addressing agronomic and financial risk of transition
4. **Scale Impact Through Partnerships** –Facilitate and scale pre-competitive partnerships across the value chain that deliver continuous improvement at the field, farm and landscape levels.
5. **Enable Credible Communications** -Enable credible stakeholder communications that facilitate and improve supply chain and industry reporting, showcase leaders in sustainability, and strengthen public confidence in the food and agriculture system.

The Board discussed several options and updated workstreams within each pillar.

1. Convene Diverse Stakeholders
	1. Discussion: Standing Committee reorganization. The Board agreed to move the Awards and Recognition Standing Committee into the Education and Outreach Standing Committee and to create a new standing committee for Innovative Finance.
	2. New Workstreams: Diversity and Inclusion and Public Policy Education
	3. Additional Resources: external consultants, new employee and/or scholarship funds
2. Provide Science-Based Leadership
	1. New Workstreams: Technology Roadmap, New Crops and Social/Behavioral Science
	2. Additional Resources: external consultants or university partner
3. Identify and Promote Innovative Incentive Strategies
	1. New Workstreams: Economic Assessment, Capacity Building and Capital Mobilization
	2. Additional Resources: external consultant or partner organizations, one new full-time employee
4. Scale Impact Through Partnerships
	1. New Workstreams: Landscape Level Collaboration and Shared Learning
	2. Additional Resources: a full-time employee to assist with project development, design and implementation
5. Enable Credible Communications
	1. Discussion: Principles and Criteria. The Board signaled a preference for pursuing strategic alignment with other programs and standards rather than pursuing Field to Market’s own novel standard
	2. Additional Resources: funding for benchmarking and implementation

Update on Business Plan and Technology Roadmap

Rod reported that Field to Market is developing a request for proposals for an update to the Business plan and Technology roadmap as an extension of the strategic planning process. He noted that funds were not allocated for this in the FY21 budget but should be considered for the FY22 budget.

Discussion with Technology Advisory Council

Rod provided an update from the TAC call on July 28 including the key questions raised for Field to Market to consider as it relates to its technology offerings. The Board discussed the most recent platform update and considerations for Qualified Data Management Partners related to the science and technology changes.

Presentation on Potential Areas of Funding

Meredith Rynkiewicz and David Beaudreaufrom DC Legislative and Regulatory Services (DCLRS) made a presentation on funding opportunities as they relate to the new strategic planning priorities. They highlighted key funding organizations and grant opportunities as well as timelines for applications and awards of grants.

**Key Harmonization and Alignment Updates**

World Business Council for Sustainable Development

Rod provided an update on recent conversations with WBCSD. Collaboration opportunities include: Scope 3 accounting, COP 26 convening, Innovative finance to advance healthy soils, and WBCSD’s potential membership in Field to Market Civil Society sector.

SAI Platform

Rod updated the Board of the ongoing work to update our equivalency with FSA 3.0, including our request to move Field to Market projects to a low-risk designation. Benchmarking to achieve this designation will take three months and would include hiring SureHarvest to conduct the first draft of the benchmark, followed by a review and final discussion and pilots.

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 Sarah Fox and seconded by David Bue to adjourn the meeting at 3:23 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.*