

 **Board of Directors | Meeting Minutes**

March 12, 2021
*Conference Call*

**Directors Present**

Jenny Ahlen, Environmental Defense Fund; Sarah Alexander, Keystone Policy Center; 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; 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; Ray Stewart, Thomson Coburn

Motions

* *A motion was made by Mark Isbell and seconded by Michelle French to approve the consent agenda. Motion passed unanimously.*
* *A motion was made and amended by Michelle French and seconded by Sarah Fox to table membership application from Indigo Ag and respond to them with a list of key points and concerns that would need to be addressed prior to the Board bringing the application to a vote. Motion carried with 2 objections and 1 abstention.*
* *A motion was made by Michelle French and seconded by Mark Isbell to adjourn the meeting at 12:33 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.*

Next Steps and Action Items

* *Staff will work with accountants to verify eligibility for a second draw PPP loan. In coordination with the executive committee, staff will work with the lender on necessary documentation.*
* *Staff will draft a memo for Indigo Ag regarding unanswered questions and concerns that would need to be addressed prior to the Board taking any action on their membership application. The Board will review the memo prior to it being sent.*
* *Staff will develop a memo outlining the potential strategies for consideration, as well as a survey for Board members to provide feedback and prioritization.*

Proceedings

**Opening**

Board Chair, Brandon Hunnicutt called the meeting to order at 11:02 a.m. Ray Stewart read the antitrust statement. Brandon reviewed old business from the January Board meeting.

**Consent Agenda**

The consent agenda included review and approval of the meeting minutes from January, approval of new member applications and revocation of lapsed members.

New Member Applications

* National Council of Farmer Cooperatives (Agribusiness| Full)
* Danforth Plant Science Center (Affiliate)

Lapsed Members:

* Wrangler
* United Sugars

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

**Finance, Operations and Membership Updates**

Finance

Rod reviewed the January 2021 financials and reported cash on hand of $703,158 with revenue at $115,756 and expenses of $210,796. He reported that official notice of forgiveness for the PPP loan was received on February 18 and it will be reflected as such in the FY2020 audit and financials.

The Board also discussed applying for a second draw PPP loan, with an acknowledgement that prolonged economic impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic remain possible as we continue through FY 2021. The Board reached consensus to allow staff to work with the accountants and lender to determine eligibility and to proceed with the loan application in coordination with the executive committee.

Rod discussed membership updates including the removal of SAI Platform, based on a misunderstanding of the MOU signed in 2020, as SAI Platform did not have a comparable level of complimentary membership to offer reciprocal participation in their organization.

Member application review

Brandon reviewed the Executive Committee recommendation on the membership application from Indigo Ag, including outstanding questions following the meeting with representatives from the company on February 8.

*A motion was made and amended by Michelle French and seconded by Sarah Fox to table membership application from Indigo Ag and respond to them with a list of key points and concerns that would need to be addressed prior to the Board bringing the application to a vote.*

*Motion carried with 2 objections and 1 abstention.*

The Board asked to approve the memo before it would be sent to Indigo Ag with the list of concerns and criteria for reconsideration.

**Next Steps on 2022-2024 Strategic Plan Development**

Brandon reviewed the proposed timeline and noted the Board would be asked to lead sector calls in the coming weeks to formally introduce the strategic planning process. Rod referred the Board to the summary of their breakout discussions in January as well as the feedback from a staff workshop on March 5. He noted the overlapping themes from both discussions related to key challenges and opportunities for Field to Market moving forward.

Betsy Hickman provided some research on understanding Field to Market’s unique positioning and leverage in the ag sustainability landscape. Rod reviewed the program scenarios from the strategic planning process in 2018 that led to Field to Market’s current strategic pillars.

Rod led the Board through a thought exercise about new strategies for consideration:

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.

The Board discussed key opportunities, potential risks and value for each of the options. Betsy noted that due to resource constraints, we should prioritize where the Board sees the largest value to our members in advancing our mission.

Staff will develop a memo outlining the potential strategies for consideration, as well as a survey for Board members to provide feedback and prioritization.

*A motion was made by Michelle French and seconded by Mark Isbell to adjourn the meeting at 12:33 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.*