



Field to Market®

PROCESS-BASED STANDARD FOR ACCELERATING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN AGRICULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

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FIELD TO MARKET VISION, MISSION, & GOALS

Our Vision: To harness the collective action of the value chain to support resilient ecosystems and enhance farmer livelihoods.

Our Mission: To meet the agricultural challenge of the 21st century by providing collaborative leadership that is transparent; grounded in science; focused on outcomes; open to the full range of technology choices; and committed to creating opportunities across the agricultural supply chain for continuous improvements in productivity, profitability, and environmental outcomes.

Our Goals:

Field to Market is working to meet the challenge of producing enough food, feed, fiber and fuel for a rapidly growing population while conserving natural resources and improving the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The organization and its members are committed to supporting resilient ecosystems and farmer economic vitality as fundamental components of agricultural sustainability. Field to Market will convene diverse stakeholders to support multi-sector collaboration, while providing useful measurement tools and educational resources for growers and the value chain that track and create opportunities for continuous improvement at scale. Our efforts are guided by the following interdependent goals:

- Biodiversity – Supporting diverse species and ecosystems by conserving and enhancing habitats across U.S. agricultural landscapes
- Energy Use – Increasing energy use efficiency on U.S. cropland
- Greenhouse Gases – Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from U.S. cropland per unit of output, and sustained contribution to reducing the overall greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural landscapes
- Irrigation Water Use – Improving irrigation water use efficiency and conservation on U.S. cropland
- Land Use – Improving productivity on U.S. cropland
- Soil Carbon – Increasing soil carbon sequestration on U.S. cropland
- Soil Conservation – Reducing soil erosion on U.S. cropland
- Water Quality – Improving regional water quality through reduction in sediment, nutrient and pesticide loss from U.S. cropland

1.0 SCOPE

1.0.1 The Principles & Requirements set out in this Process-Based Standard (Standard) are applicable to all Field to Market Project Administrators and Continuous Improvement Projects. It also represents the Requirements against which projects can pursue both sustainability claims and verification, if desired.

- 1.0.2 As an organization committed to both advancing continuous improvement in agriculture and within our programmatic approach, Field to Market will pilot this Standard with members for a one-year period, following two member comment periods, before engaging external stakeholders in a public comment period.
- 1.0.3 Once the Standard is finalized, Field to Market may issue minor updates and changes from time to time, providing clarifications or corrections to the Requirements. These shall be published to the Field to Market website and shall be applicable as per the date specifically stated for each update. Field to Market shall provide notice of all such changes and the dates for implementation and applicability on its website. Any substantive changes will go through member and public comment periods.
- 1.0.4 Stakeholders may submit suggested updates, edits, changes or additions at any time to Field to Market by submission to standard@fieldtomarket.org. Such requests shall be considered as per the Field to Market Standards Setting Requirements. Field to Market reserves the right to accept or reject such submissions at its own discretion.

2.0 TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Application Programming Interface (API): The Fieldprint Platform API connects our eight sustainability metrics and associated algorithms directly to farm management software solutions, allowing growers to assess the environmental performance of their management practices against regional, state and national benchmarks for key sustainability indicators. It is relevant for projects that work with a Qualified Data Management Partner to collect and store their data.

Assurance Principles: Field to Market's Assurance Principles provide a framework for Field to Market members for the selection and provision of different levels of assurance in meeting Field to Market standards. The document can be accessed [here](#).

Continuous Improvement Plan: A Project-based plan for improvement in environmental outcomes over time that includes goals and objective(s) relevant to addressing the identified natural resource concern and a grower engagement plan that considers outreach, engagement, support and retention over the length of the project.

Continuous Improvement Plan Baseline: A starting measurement for a project from which improvement and achievement of project objective(s) will be measured. This baseline will be public as part of the Continuous Improvement Plan and should be related to actions that are under the control of the Project. Examples for the different types of objectives include the starting number of growers that have been engaged for engagement objectives, the starting number or percent of project participants that have

adopted a practice that a project plans to implement for adoption objectives, and the starting metric outcome for metric change objectives.

Claims: Statements or assertions of Field to Market participation or membership, or improvements in practices or environmental outcomes related to Field to Market Continuous Improvement Projects.

Project Participation Claim: A statement or assertion of participation in a Field to Market Project by a Field to Market member organization or licensee, which may also include the number of acres and growers enrolled in the project.

Adoption Claim: A claim that is related to the uptake of a specific practice or intervention in the context of a project that has a public-facing Continuous Improvement Plan.

Measurement Claim: A claim that documents a one-year snapshot of aggregate environmental outcomes from the project.

Trends Claim: A claim that documents directional improvements or reductions in Field to Market's outcomes-based metrics during the initial years of a project.

Impact Claim: A claim that quantifies actual sustained improvements or reductions over time against Field to Market's outcomes-based metrics at the conclusion of a multi-year project.

Fieldprint® Platform: An assessment framework to measure the environmental impacts of commodity crop production and identify opportunities for continuous improvement. It encompasses the suite of technologies available to Field to Market growers and members.

Metrics: Continuous Improvement Plans must state which of eight Field to Market sustainability indicators to focus on based on local natural resource concerns and global sustainable development priorities. These metrics are:

- Biodiversity
- Energy Use
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Irrigation Water Use
- Land Use
- Soil Carbon
- Soil Conservation
- Water Quality

For Incubation Projects where use of the Fieldprint Platform is not required, there must be a science-based relationship to one of these metrics. For Insight and Innovation Projects which utilize The Fieldprint Platform, the Platform provides a Fieldprint Analysis which estimates field level performance on these sustainability metrics.

Project Administrator: The Project lead who is responsible for overseeing project administration, quality control and communications with participating growers and all sponsors and partners.

Project Directory: A public-facing listing of Field to Market Continuous Improvement Projects including Continuous Improvement Plans and annual reporting.

Project Sponsor: A Field to Market Full Member that invests in and guides the direction of the Project and is responsible for ensuring compliance with requirements.

Project Partner: A Field to Market Associate Member or non-member who has contributed to a Project or has been contracted to provide service to a Project, is officially listed in Project documentation, and has met licensing requirements.

Project Status: Public-facing listing of the status of Field to Market Continuous Improvement Projects as Prospective, Active, Suspended, Terminated or Sunset.

Qualified Data Management Partner (QDMP): Farm-management software solution providers that have been approved by Field to Market and whose software solutions connect to all of Field to Market's sustainability metrics and associated algorithms from the Fieldprint Platform via an Application Programming Interface (API). A list of currently available QDMPs can be found along with additional information about the Platform [here](#).

Sampling Framework: A framework enabled by Field to Market to aid in designing a project where data is collected from a representative sample of growers over time to be used in reporting results about the whole. The framework specifies that any outreach and technical support must reach the full population included in the project, even where only a sample is entering data. The Framework can be accessed [here](#).

3.0 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

Figure 1 – Field to Market’s Process for Accelerating Continuous Improvement



3.1 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 advancing continuous improvement (*Figure 1*), which is grounded in a foundation that delivers solutions to global sustainable development priorities while also addressing local natural resource concerns.

By offering three unique Continuous Improvement Project pathways, 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 transparency by benchmarking sustainability performance, or supporting innovative incentive programs to accelerate adoption of more sustainable practices, our flexible approach to project design creates shared value and improves environmental outcomes, unlocking lasting impact.

The Accelerator supports three pathways to advance sustainable agriculture:

- **INCUBATION** – Creates enabling conditions by engaging with farmers on the connection between practices and at least one of the sustainability outcomes targeted in Field to Market's program
- **INSIGHT** – Offers sustainability insights for farmers and transparency for value chain partners through measurement using the Fieldprint Platform, either through the online calculator or approved software (API)
- **INNOVATION** - Provides tangible support for farmer in accelerating adoption of practices that deliver improved sustainability outcomes measured by the Fieldprint Platform and consistent with the published goals of the Project

These projects utilize the power of voluntary, and often market-driven, solutions to incentivize improved environmental outcomes and enhance farmer livelihoods. By following a standardized and validated approach, these project pathways can leverage the collective action of the value chain to support resilient ecosystems and enhance farmer livelihoods.

3.2 Eligibility Requirements

The following elements are requirements 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.
- **Objective(s)** - A Continuous Improvement Project must define the near-term scope of the project with at least one timebound 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. The Continuous Improvement Plan and associated target dates must be made publicly available.
- **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.

3.3 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.

3.3.1 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 ZERO

- *Projects must determine scope by identifying the geographic boundaries as specifically as possible. While all projects must 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.*
- *Projects must identify and focus on at least one of the crops within Field to Market's program. The current crops that are included are alfalfa, barley, corn, corn silage, cotton, peanuts, rice, sorghum, soybeans, sugar beets and wheat.*
- *Projects must 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.*

PHASE ONE

- *Projects must target improvement in at least one of Field to Market's eight sustainability indicators. Use of the Fieldprint Platform is not required as improvement will be measured through implementation of the project's Continuous Improvement Plan.*
- *Project Sponsor must engage with project participants to jointly develop the Project Registration and Continuous Improvement Plan.*
- *Projects must define at least one timebound and measurable continuous improvement objective(s).*
- *Projects must consider what suite of locally relevant conservation practices can contribute solutions to pressing natural resource concerns in the region before developing supporting continuous improvement strategies.*
- *Each project must develop a baseline for each continuous improvement objective to evaluate progress achieved on an annual basis.*
- *Projects' continuous improvement strategies and activities must 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 TWO

- *Projects must implement continuous improvement strategies and activities to deliver against the measurable, timebound objective(s) outlined in their Continuous Improvement Plan.*
- *Projects must 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 results.

- Projects must engage with growers in assessing how their management practices impact the targeted sustainability outcome for a minimum of one year.*
- Projects that have filed annual reports are eligible to make adoption claims (e.g., percentage increase in conservation practice or technology adoption).*
- 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).*

PHASE THREE

- Projects must evaluate how their engagement supports farmers in pursuing improvement in the targeted sustainability outcome by comparing results against established project baseline(s).*
- Upon project completion, each project must publicly share 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).*

3.3.2 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 ZERO

- Projects must determine scope by identifying the geographic boundaries as specifically as possible. While all projects must 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.*
- Projects must identify and focus on at least one of the crops within Field to Market's program. The current crops that are included are alfalfa, barley, corn, corn silage, cotton, peanuts, rice, sorghum, soybeans, sugar beets and wheat.*
- Projects must 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.*
- For Projects that are interested in using sampling consult [Field to Market's Sampling Framework](#).*

PHASE ONE

- *Projects must target improvement in at least one of Field to Market's sustainability indicators while providing measurement across all eight outcomes through the Fieldprint Platform.*
- *Project Sponsor must engage with project participants to jointly develop the Project Registration and Continuous Improvement Plan.*
- *Projects must define at least one timebound and measurable continuous improvement objective(s).*
- *Projects should consider what suite of locally relevant conservation practices can contribute solutions to pressing natural resource concerns in the region before developing supporting continuous improvement strategies.*
- *Each project must develop a baseline for each continuous improvement objective to evaluate progress achieved on an annual basis.*
- *Projects' continuous improvement strategies and activities must 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.*
- *Projects must 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.*

PHASE TWO

- *To pursue continuous improvement, projects must utilize at least one year of data collection to set a baseline against which to evaluate how their continuous improvement strategies and activities support improvement in the targeted sustainability outcome.*
- *Projects must implement continuous improvement strategies and activities to deliver against the measurable, timebound objective(s) outlined in their Continuous Improvement Plan.*
- *Projects must 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.*
- *Projects must provide aggregate results for all Field to Market sustainability metrics to project sponsors and partners on an annual basis.*
- *Projects that have filed annual reports are eligible to make adoption claims (e.g., percentage increase in conservation practice or technology adoption) or trends claims (e.g. interim directional improvement in a metric outcome).*
- *Projects must 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 results.

PHASE THREE

- *Projects must evaluate how their engagement with farmers supports farmers in pursuing improvement in the targeted sustainability outcome by comparing results against project baseline(s).*
- *Upon project completion, each project must publicly share 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.*

3.3.3 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 ZERO

- *Projects must determine scope by identifying the geographic boundaries as specifically as possible. While all projects must 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.*
- *Projects must identify and focus on at least one of the crops within Field to Market's program. The current crops that are included are alfalfa, barley, corn, corn silage, cotton, peanuts, rice, sorghum, soybeans, sugar beets and wheat.*
- *Projects must 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.*
- *For Projects that are interested in using sampling please consult [Field to Market's Sampling Framework](#).*

PHASE ONE

- *Projects must target improvement in at least one of Field to Market's sustainability indicators while providing measurement across all eight outcomes through the Fieldprint Platform.*
- *Project Sponsor must engage with project participants to jointly develop the Project Registration and Continuous Improvement Plan.*
- *Projects must define at least one timebound and measurable continuous improvement objective(s).*
- *Projects must consider what suite of locally relevant conservation practices can contribute solutions to pressing natural resource concerns in the region before developing supporting continuous improvement strategies.*
- *Each project must develop a baseline for each continuous improvement objective to evaluate progress achieved on an annual basis.*
- *Projects must outline in their Continuous Improvement Plan what tangible support (i.e., technical assistance, cost-share programs, etc.) the project will utilize to assist growers in pursuing increased adoption of locally relevant conservation practices to deliver improved sustainability outcomes. Unlike other project pathways, the provision of this information is an explicit requirement for Innovation Projects.*
- *Projects must 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.*

PHASE TWO

- *Projects must implement continuous improvement strategies and activities to deliver against the measurable, timebound objective(s) outlined in their Continuous Improvement Plan.*
- *Projects must 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.*
- *Projects must offer ongoing tangible support to assist farmers in pursuing increased adoption of practices to deliver improved sustainability outcomes.*
- *Projects must 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.*
- *Projects must 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 results.

- *Projects that have filed annual reports are eligible to make adoption claims (e.g., percentage increase in conservation practice adoption) or trends claims (e.g. interim directional improvement in a metric outcome).*

PHASE THREE

- *Projects must evaluate how their engagement with farmers supports farmers in pursuing improvement in the targeted sustainability outcome by comparing results against project baseline(s).*
- *If the project chooses to sunset after Phase Three, each project must publicly share a project level evaluation demonstrating how the project has supported farmers in pursuing continuous improvement, such as assessing the efficacy of the Project's strategy for driving accelerated practice adoption.*

PHASE FOUR (Optional)

- *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.*
- *Projects may pursue an Impact Claim, quantifying sustained change the duration of a multi-year project, by following the [Impact Claims Verification 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 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.*
- *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.*
- *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.*

4.0 COMMUNICATIONS & CLAIMS

4.1 Annual Review

By April 30 of each year a project is active, it is required to report progress against the stated objective(s) in the project's published Continuous Improvement Plan. The annual report must be made public on Field to Market's Project Directory as progress tracking and reporting is a key requirement to maintain active project status. Because transparency underpins Field to Market's approach to accelerating continuous improvement, each project must also communicate the level of verification (first-party or self-reporting, second-party or third-party) utilized to validate the results reported on Field to Market's Project Directory. Field to Market encourages credible communication in reporting annual progress and project results and outlines best practices projects should follow in [Field to Market's Assurance Principles](#).

4.2 Project Review

4.2.1 Project Evaluation

Upon completion, each project is required to conduct a project-level evaluation of the results achieved against the goal(s) and objective(s) in the project's published Continuous Improvement Plan and make a summary of this project-level evaluation public on Field to Market's public-facing Project Directory.

4.2.2 Sunsetting Projects

When a project reports that it is complete and meets all reporting requirements, Field to Market will move the project to the Sunset section of the public-facing Project Directory. Sunset projects will remain on the public-facing Project Directory indefinitely. Field to Market will not continue to review projects' progress once marked as Sunset on the project directory.

4.3 Claims Eligibility

In addition to publicly reporting progress against the stated objective(s) in a project's Continuous Improvement Plan in Field to Market's Project Directory, projects are eligible to make the following claims:

- **Project Participation Claims** (*i.e., number of growers and acres*). These claims are now enabled for all projects through annual project reporting and communicated publicly on the Project Directory
- **Adoption Claims** (*i.e., practice or technology adoption consistent with continuous improvement goal(s) and objective(s)*). These claims are now enabled through annual project reporting and communicated publicly on the Project Directory for Projects that have objectives that are focused on increasing adoption of practices or technology
- **Measurement Claims** (*e.g., aggregate metric outcomes for one year*). These claims are enabled for Insight and Innovation Projects and must be filed for approval through the Field to Market Member Portal.
- **Trends Claim:** (*e.g., directional improvement in metric outcomes achieved in early years of a multi-year project*). This type of claim is enabled for Insight and

Innovation Projects and must be filed for approval through the Field to Market Member Portal.

- **Impact Claims** (*i.e., quantified change in a metric outcome over a multi-year project's duration*). These claims are enabled for Insight and Innovation Projects and must be filed for approval through the Field to Market Member Portal.

Field to Market encourages its members to pursue evidence-based communication. To make it simple for members to credibly communicate progress and impact, Field to Market's Claims Protocols outline key requirements that projects must meet for the intended claim they seek to make.

4.4 Assurance Principles

Field to Market prioritizes transparency in the level of verification of progress reports that appear on the Field to Market Project Directory. Field to Market Staff is responsible for reviewing Project Registration data when it is submitted. This is an important step in determining that the project has met the registration requirements for the Process-Based Standard for the desired project type. Beyond these initial steps, the desired level of verification of annual progress and results is determined by Project Sponsors where projects can choose between first-, second-, and third-party verification. Transparency allows Continuous Improvement Project Sponsors the flexibility to determine the level of risk that they are willing to assume in ensuring the accuracy of their reports, and the corresponding level of investment that they will commit to the verification of their project results. The chosen level of verification will be indicated by a badge on the Project Results Page. It must be noted that the only circumstance where Field to Market explicitly requires third-party verification is when projects seek an Impact Claim. For additional information consult the [Assurance Principles](#).

First-Party Verified

These are projects where the assessment of progress is performed by the person or organization that is being assessed for progress. Examples include self-assessments, internal audits, or Project Growers entering data directly into the Fieldprint Platform without technical assistance. Numerous quality control mechanisms have been implemented within the Fieldprint Platform to support a high level of data accuracy, but there may still be some room for user error. Projects assume the risk that information is inaccurate. For Incubation Projects which are not required to utilize the Fieldprint Platform, projects should ensure that they have implemented sound record keeping for growers, acres, and progress against objectives.

Second-Party Verified

These are projects where the assessment of progress is performed by a contracted

party which has a user interest in the outcome of the assessment. In this case there is more objectivity than first-party verification, but because there is a relationship between the party conducting the assessment and the party that the assessment is for, there is still the potential for a conflict of interest. In the context of Field to Market this can be a contracted technical service provider, contracted Qualified Data Management Partner, NGO Project Administrator or other entity that is being contracted and paid by a Project Sponsor to manage a project. The risk of inaccurate data collection is lower than first-party, but projects should still be able to respond to external stakeholders regarding the quality assurance processes in place to ensure the accuracy of results reported on the Project Directory. For Incubation Projects which are not required to utilize the Fieldprint Platform, projects should ensure that their contractors have implemented sound record keeping for growers, acres, and progress against objectives and can provide evidence of these processes if requested.

Third-Party Verified

These are projects for which the assessment of progress is performed by an entity that is independent and free from conflicts of interest, having no vested interest in the outcome of the reported results. In the context of Field to Market this would include letters of audit findings issued by an independent party. Field to Market only requires third-party verification for projects that file Impact Claims, but projects may also opt for third-party verification to cover the risk associated with other types of claims. For projects that are reporting against adoption objectives, third party verification can take different forms, ranging from having growers show USDA-NRCS practice certification, or other certificates or letters of completion, to designing an independent audit to verify adoption in the field. Projects choosing this status must be prepared to show documentation in the event of external stakeholder inquiries to support their “Third-Party Verified” status.

5.0 PROJECT STATUS

5.1 PROSPECTIVE

Prospective projects can be registered through the Project Directory prior to finalizing a Continuous Improvement Plan in order to identify project intent and scope. This type of project is also eligible to be listed on the Partnership Exchange to find collaborators.

5.2 ACTIVE

Only projects that meet all requirements for their respective Project Pathway are eligible to become an Active Project. Once a project has met all requirements for Active status,

Field to Market will list the project as “Active” on the public-facing Project Directory. After this initial listing, projects must submit Annual Reports each year to continue to be listed as “Active”. A subset of the information that is reported in Annual Reports, including progress against stated objective(s), will be listed publicly to provide transparency into how a project is proceeding against its stated objective(s) and what opportunities or hurdles have been encountered.

Once a project has been listed on the public-facing Project Directory as “Active”, its status will be tracked and posted annually for the lifespan of the project, including the reason for the conclusion of the project. Projects that do not file Annual Reports will have their project status changed to one of the following categories of inactive projects to reflect their non-conformity. Inactive projects will remain on the public-facing Project Directory indefinitely.

5.3 SUSPENDED

A project can be suspended by Field to Market’s Board of Directors at staff recommendation for the following reasons:

- 1) Not submitting an annual report. An annual report will be considered missed if not completed within one month of the reporting deadline.
- 2) Reasonable complaint about the project that warrants further investigation – See Section 6, Dispute Resolution and Appeals Process for more information
- 3) Not meeting Field to Market’s membership and licensing requirements

5.4 TERMINATED

A project is terminated when it self-reports that it is ending without achieving project goal(s) and objective(s).

Field to Market understands that plans and resourcing may change. It also understands the importance of continuity and credibility in project reporting. If a project must end early, it is important that stakeholders can evaluate progress and learn if a project ended prior to reaching its stated goal(s) and objective(s). After going through the termination process, a public-facing statement that includes the reason for early termination will accompany the project. If the participating farmers in the project wish to continue their continuous improvement journey, Field to Market will make efforts to connect participating farmers from the project being terminated with new Project Sponsors through the Partnership Exchange.

5.5 SUNSET

The project is sunset when it reports that it has achieved its goal(s) and objective(s), and it ends in good standing. All final reporting is filed to Field to Market and the project status is then changed on the Partnership Exchange.

6.0 DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND APPEAL PROCESS

Field to Market will closely and carefully consider all disputes arising from projects. The following describes the types of claims and communications disputes that will be considered, the dispute resolution process, and public communications regarding disputes. Given the public-facing nature of the Project Directory, information provided by projects and posted on the Project Directory constitutes a form of claim.

Types of Claims Disputes:

- Disputes about a claim or other communication made by a Field to Market member or non-member that refers to: Membership in Field to Market or that references participation in or substantial connection to a Field to Market project; claims that describe measurements made using Field to Market Fieldprint metrics; claims that describe practices implemented by a project; claims that describe investments in a project, or, claims that reference outcomes or impacts using Field to Market Fieldprint metrics.
- Disputes about a claim assessment or a claims assessment process conducted by a third-party assessor.
- Disputes against the actions or decisions of an individual Field to Market staff member or contractor regarding the use of Field to Market' Platform or process-based standard to make claims.

Process:

A. Attempted Resolution

Disputing parties are encouraged to attempt to resolve disputes prior to filing the claims dispute with Field to Market. Should negotiations between disputing parties fail to reach an agreement, a record of the attempted resolution process should accompany the filed dispute.

B. Appeal Filed

If the dispute cannot be resolved informally, a stakeholder may enter a formal appeal process to dispute the information listed on the project directory by filing an appeal in writing. All appeals and any supporting information related to the dispute must be submitted either via email to claims@fieldtomarket.org or mailed via first class post to:

Field to Market
Attn: Claims Dispute Resolution
777 N Capitol Ave NE
Suite 802
Washington, DC 20002

The initial burden of proof and background for the claims dispute rests with the party raising the dispute, who will be required to provide all of the following

information before the dispute will be taken under consideration by Field to Market:

- Information about the party raising the dispute, that includes:
- Representative organization, contact person, and title/position.
- Information that demonstrates legitimacy of the party to raise a dispute.
 - Contact information, including email, phone number, and mailing address.
 - Name of the individual or organization that they are concerned with in their appeal.
- Details on nature of the dispute and about which elements of the Field to Market standard is being broken.
- Documentation and other supporting information to directly substantiate the dispute, including a concise narrative with clear links to supporting information that justifies the dispute.
- Written information that previous steps were undertaken to seek resolution directly with the organization concerned in their dispute prior to initiating the Field to Market Dispute Resolution and Appeal Process.
- Recommendations from the party raising the dispute that provide clear, concise and specific actions and activities to correct problems raised in their dispute.
- If the appealing party is an outside stakeholder, it will remain anonymous during the process.

C. INITIAL REVIEW

Upon receipt of the claims dispute, Field to Market will make an initial assessment of the filed dispute and determine whether the dispute is within scope:

1. If the dispute is within scope, Field to Market will notify the party that filed the claims dispute in writing that their dispute is within scope and outline the next steps in the dispute resolution process and intended timeline for response.
2. Field to Market will then request a response in writing from the party in question that addresses the allegations. After 20 business days of the date of receipt of this notification, the available information with respect to the claims dispute will be finalized, and no further evidence will be considered.
3. Within 15 business days of the finalization of the information, the dispute resolution process will begin with subcommittee assisted mediation.
4. In subcommittee mediation, an appointed and sector-diverse subcommittee of Field to Market representatives will assist both parties in generating and negotiating concrete, actionable solutions to the issues in dispute.
 - The subcommittee will be comprised of the Chair of the Field to Market Board of Directors and three other Field to Market member representatives.
 - These three members of the subcommittee will be appointed by the Executive Committee of Field to Market and will each represent a different voting sector.

- To avoid conflict of interest, any member that is not independent from the project or the appealing party will not be selected to serve on the subcommittee and will abstain from any discussions/decisions about the appeal with subcommittee members.

D. FINAL DECISION

The subcommittee will pursue one of the following outcomes and a final decision must be reached within 30 calendar days:

- Memorandum of Understanding – a document containing concrete, actionable actions to be undertaken by the parties to resolve the issues in dispute to the satisfaction of each.
- Memorandum of Understanding with Outstanding Issues – as above, with specific unresolved issues called out
- Finding of No Agreement – contains a record of the attempted negotiation and a list of the issues that remain unresolved
- Finding of No Conflict – makes note that the negotiation resulted in neither outstanding issues nor remedial actions to resolve issues originally in dispute

B. DECISION COMMUNICATED

Field to Market will communicate the final decision back to the party requesting appeal within one week as well as the Project Administrator. While the subcommittee decision will not be made public, the project may wish to do its own communication about its status. If the result of the subcommittee findings determines malfeasance or inaccurate information supplied by the project, the appropriate measures to address non-conformity will be taken such as project suspension or termination.

For the full process for claims and communications resolution, please refer to the Field to Market [Claims Dispute Process](#).

7.0 VERSION HISTORY

Version/Date	Change	Link
1.2	Standard for Piloting	Current
1.1	Second Discussion Draft for Member Comment	Link
1.0	First Discussion Draft for Member Comment	Link