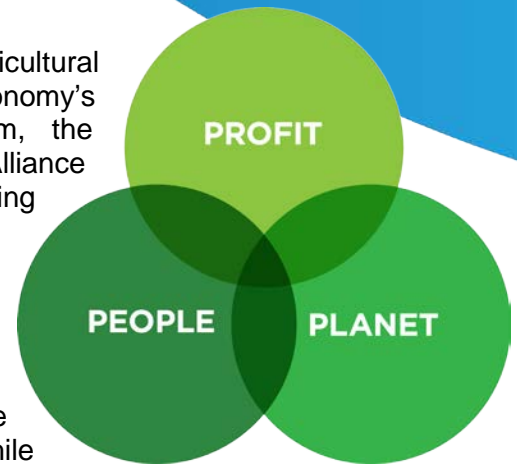


SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMMING FOR AG RETAILERS AND CCAS

THE SPARC INITIATIVE

The SPARC initiative is a partnership between the Agricultural Retailers Association (ARA), the American Society of Agronomy's (ASA) International Certified Crop Advisers Program, the Environmental Defense Fund and Field to Market: The Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture focused on developing sustainability programming for agricultural retailers and certified crop advisers (CCAs).



VISION

By 2022, ag retailers and certified crop advisers will provide sustainability services to the majority of U.S. farmers while measuring and continuously improving environmental outcomes.

MISSION

To pre-competitively strengthen the ability of ag retailers and certified crop advisers to deliver services that drive continuous improvement in the productivity, profitability and environmental outcomes of farmers' operations.

THEORY OF CHANGE

As farming becomes increasingly complex, growers must consider many factors as they make decisions about conserving soil and improving soil health; planting; fertilizing; managing for disease and pests; and optimizing energy and water use. Trusted farmer advisers, like CCAs, are a critical source for advice and influence continuous improvement in sustainability outcomes as they help farmers navigate this complex decision matrix, weighing the costs and benefits of various approaches.

As such, trusted advisers are in a powerful position to scale up efforts to deliver sustainable outcomes for U.S. agriculture. The SPARC initiative's theory of change is that sustainability outcomes can be improved by pre-competitively strengthening the ability of CCAs and ag retailers to deliver sustainability services that provide both agronomic and environmental benefits.

RESOURCES

ONLINE LEARNING MODULES

Hosted in the CCA classroom at the American Society of Agronomy, these modules introduce the fundamentals of agricultural sustainability. Each module touches on a different aspect of the conversation, from a basic "what is sustainability?" to the metrics used by current measurement tools such as the Fieldprint® Platform, to the products and services - including measurement- that can be offered to farmer customers in support sustainability, to the economic impacts of implementing certain practices and finally, strategic approaches an ag business might take to include sustainability as a core offering to their customers.

Sustainability 101 – Defines sustainability and the growing demand from customers for sustainably-sourced products. This module is introductory in nature and is intended to define some of the common terms used in sustainability conversations.

Environmental Sustainability Metrics - Explains the eight sustainability outcomes measured by the Fieldprint® Platform and how they affect corporate decision making in the supply chain. This module expands on the question of “why sustainability?” introduced in the first module.

Practices & Services Supporting Sustainable Agronomy - Relates the environmental metrics to the practices and products that drive continuous improvement in farm sustainability outcomes. This module is not intended to be prescriptive, but to allow the learner to connect familiar agronomic practices to environmental sustainability.

Measuring Success - Picking up the refrain “You can’t manage what you don’t measure”, this module identifies the tools used to measure sustainability outcomes and describes the value of measurement and communicating improvements.

The Farmer Business Case for Sustainability - We know growers are reluctant to change or adopt new practices without strong evidence of a potential pay-off for doing so. This unit highlights farmers that have implemented sustainable practices in their operations and the economic benefits of doing so.

Developing a Sustainability Program - Explores the reasons an agribusiness might consider shifting their business model to include packaging agronomic products and services as part of a comprehensive sustainability program and offers ideas to communicate the value of doing so to employees and customers.

PRINT MATERIALS

Sustainability Manual for training staff to incorporate sustainability insights into the products and services they offer their farmer clientele.

Know the Issues fact sheets explain the top eight environmental issues being addressed in production agriculture. These sheets can be customized with a company logo and packaged to demonstrate sustainability expertise.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

The SPARC Initiative is interested in collaborating with organizations at a state, regional and national level to amplify and complement existing efforts to support trusted farmer advisers and their farmer clientele in delivering improved sustainability outcomes for U.S. agriculture. If you would like to explore opportunities for collaboration, please contact: Kelly Murray Young, Field to Market’s Educational Resource Manager at kyoung@fieldtomarket.org or (202) 674-7433.

Sustainability Programming for Ag Retailers and CCAs (SPARC)



WITH SUPPORT FROM THE MIDWEST ROW CROP COLLABORATIVE