

NISA ROAD MAP

NISA National Sustainability Framework and Coordinating Board

NISA national priorities for agriculture sustainability:

- Guiding principles for agriculture sustainability
- Desired outcomes, metric options and best management practices
- Collaboration with producers, government agencies, NGOs, producer organizations, value chain, other sustainability initiatives and researchers
- Work with NRCS and other agencies to tailor programs that harmonize with existing sustainability initiatives

The NISA Coordinating Board harmonizes local /regional initiatives with national priorities:

- Integrate appropriate tools of Field to Market, Stewardship Index, The Sustainability Consortium, etc. at local/regional scales
- Work with regional and local initiatives to help them identify desired outcomes, metrics, best management practices, data collections methods, etc.
- Provide technical recommendation on regional optimization and research needs
- Provide examples of assessment tools and training materials

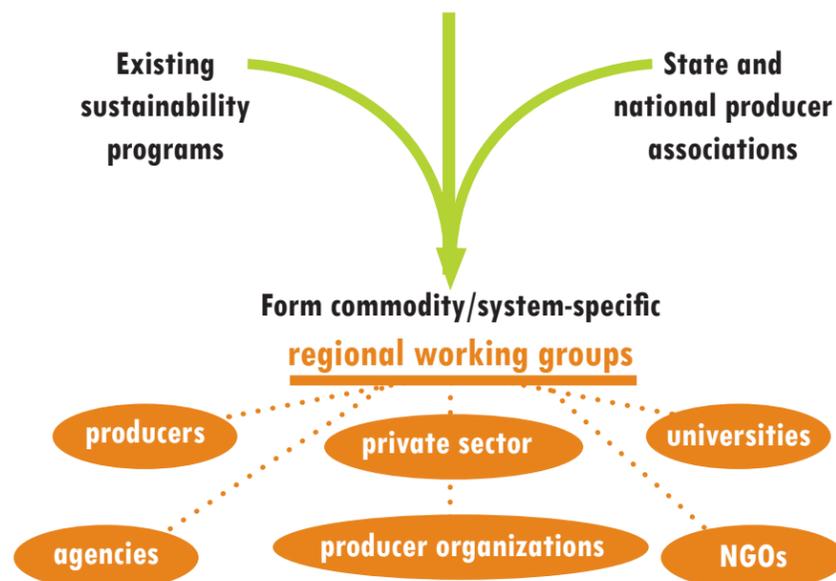
Communicate results to a wide audience:

- Communicate sustainability success by publicizing achievements to value chain, public and marketplace
- Conduct annual NISA conference to review initiatives and recruit new members

Local/Regional Producer-led Sustainability Initiatives

Starting a new initiative:

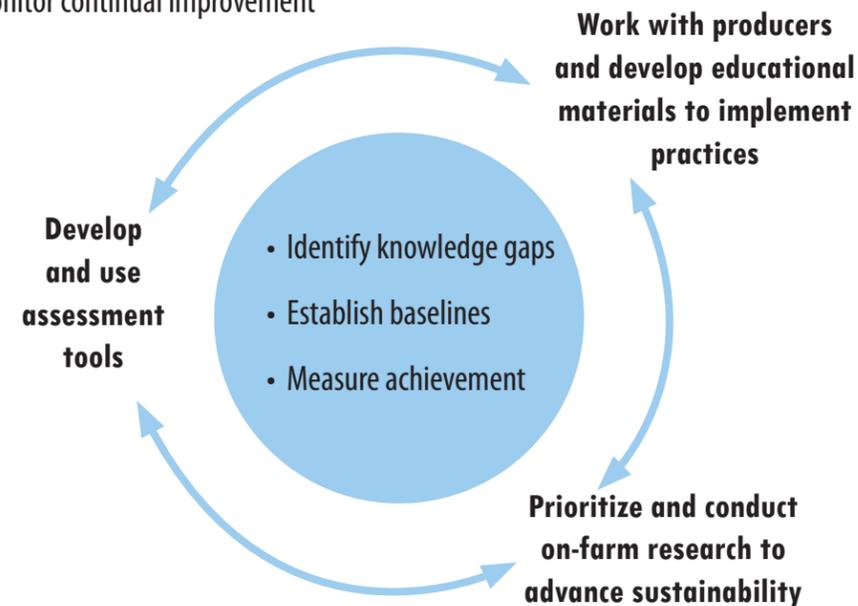
- Establish a leadership team
- Identify needs and priority outcomes
- Set goals and develop a proposal
- Work with NISA to review framework



► **stage 1:** New initiatives

Implementation by regional working groups:

- Refine goals and identify specific practices for the region
- Integrate new effort with existing local/regional programs and validate their metric tools against farm specific data
- Identify markets and branding needs, and communicate goals with producers
- Monitor continual improvement



► **stage 2:** Implementation

Communicate results to NISA Coordinating Board and producer groups:

- Evaluate program and measure progress
- Identify successful outcomes with validated data
- Communicate achievement and improvements
- Participate in establishing sustainability requirements

► **stage 3:** Communication





Mission and Guiding Principles

Mission Statement: To develop a roadmap of farm management systems that allow producers to achieve sustainability outcomes, improve the environmental services and productivity of their farms, and satisfy performance expectations of the value chain. These efforts will be targeted at the grassroots level in order to give producers access to the tools that assist in farm level changes.

Guiding Principles: NISA provides the following guiding principles for implementation of sustainable agriculture programs that are true to our Mission:

- **Producer participation and leadership:** Because farmers manage the land, they must be engaged in conversations about the future direction of agricultural production. Producer participation will allow for the identification of practical methods that contribute to the development of more sustainable production systems. Adoption of sustainable management systems should not be a financial burden to producers. Instead, documented improvements in the sustainability of production systems should enable producers to market their investment in sustainability and subsequent accomplishments. This will provide a factual basis for communications with the general public, policy makers and value chain partners about the positive contributions of agriculture to rural and urban communities.
- **Regional expert groups, leadership and coordination with national relevance:** Sustainable crop management is context dependent and will require adjustments to local production conditions. As a result, national initiatives must allow for local identification of critical issues and desired outcomes, while acknowledging global constraints. For successful implementation, local expertise (producers and researchers) must participate in the process
- **Component balance:** Successful implementation of sustainability programs must ensure producer livelihoods. This can be accomplished through improved input efficiency, decreased waste or enhanced value for the adoption of practices that improve the impact of agriculture on the environment and promote vibrant rural communities.
- **Data-based with improvement over time:** To have meaning for producers, sustainability programs must include mechanisms that allow for the quantification of sustainability related outcomes and continued documentation of future improvements. Quantification tools must be cost efficient to the producer, verifiable, and respectful of needs for confidentiality and ownership of data.
- **Research foundation:** Sustainability programs must be founded in scientifically proven methods that achieve desirable outcomes. Additionally, coordinated regional sustainability initiatives must identify data gaps and prioritize research needs.
- **Independent verification and validation:** Outcomes of sustainability initiatives must be verifiable. The verification process must be linked to the value of accomplishments in the marketplace, and costs should be minimized or shared through the supply chain.



This roadmap is a proposal for the process which the National Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture (NISA) can use to advance producer-led sustainability programs at the local/regional and national levels. The roadmap visually outlines the proposed structure and process for the parallel producer-led local/regional and national groups for developing sustainability strategies in three stages. This effort is an evolving process, with the roadmap serving as a starting place to bring the local/regional and national discussions together under one program.

On the upper portion of the diagram is the NISA national effort, which would be led by a national coordinating board consisting of producers. The board's main objectives would be to ensure that the regional efforts are working toward valuable and reasonable sustainability efforts at the producer level, while also maintaining a national presence in other sustainability discussion. The board would be responsible for the communication mechanisms on the national stage, which could include working with retailers, government agencies, non-government organizations, or other private entities.

The local/regional level is where the on-farm sustainability work is done, and this is where producers would be most engaged to document and measure their progress as related to their own regional issues. These groups are comprised of leaders in production systems, educators, retailers, or others who may have valuable input into practical sustainability efforts. The main goals of the regional groups are to initiate the process, implement and document change, and communicate the advancements. The key is that these groups are locally focused, so they can modify their goals and/or change directions to implement sustainability strategies that are appropriate for individual production systems in their region.

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