National Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture (NISA)
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.

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 management 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 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.