



Key Updates: October 2014

1) NISA leadership has developed new strategies to accelerate and build on our success engaging producers and to connect that success with the increasing supply chain needs for field-level data.

A key to taking that success to the next level is building mutually beneficial programs that connect producers with their supply chain customers. We are exploring complementary opportunities with Field to Market and other metrics- and relationship-focused organizations to work together. Our vision is that NISA would provide a broad entry-level, practice-based assessment that would work well with nearly any organization's more intensive, outcome-based metrics that focus on a smaller set of environmental parameters. One example of those discussions that particularly interests us is that NISA leadership has been invited to participate in the upcoming Field to Market plenary meeting in November to explore potential opportunities.

2) We've added 12 additional commodity assessment projects in the past few months. NISA has taken the big step of expanding from crop to animal assessments with the addition of regional beef and pork projects. NISA staff worked closely with subject matter experts, animal producers and commodity associations to finalize and implement an assessment program. These assessments are now live and will continue to collect data post-grain harvest and at producer association winter meetings. We also have new funding to work with producers, processors and the supply chain to build and implement 7 new mid-size fresh and processed vegetable commodity assessment programs. Crops will include: pickles, kraut cabbage, onions, dry beans, carrots, peppers and table beets. In other projects, assessment data from New York snap bean production has been collected and is being analyzed. We also continue to collect assessment data on an Illinois watershed-specific soybean project with the Illinois Soybean Association. Finally, the statistical analysis described below has been adapted to address specific areas of producer and public interest in greater depth, such as in a new survey of irrigation efficiency and technology adoption among potato producers.

3) The Frontiers of Sustainability™ data analysis methodology received key validation through a stringent peer-review process that resulted in a publication in a high-impact journal, *Journal of Environmental Management*. Pre-publication link: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0301479714004423>. Additional related manuscripts have been submitted and are in review.

4) The Grower Scorecards™ are in final development and are on target to be delivered to producers in the first assessment project (Midwest processing vegetables) in February 2015. This tool provides critical feedback to producers on how they compare to their peers in practice adoption, and most importantly, prioritizes the practices that could be adopted that will most rapidly drive them toward the Frontiers of Sustainability.

5) NISA leadership has been invited to present the methodology and project results at several upcoming state, regional and national level meetings.

6) NISA is in the final process of forming a private entity that will allow the organization to work nimbly and efficiently, adapt to new sustainability needs and opportunities and expand further nationally. Additionally, the organization will add key strategic communications and industry outreach expertise that will bring farmers and the food chain together in a way that uses assessment project results as a foundation in addressing the increasing misunderstandings among those that produce our food and fiber, their customers and consumers. More details on this exciting evolution forthcoming.