



### ***Validating the Stewardship Claim to Ensure a Profitable and Sustainable American Agriculture Industry***

Consumers worldwide are demanding *environmentally friendly* products. U.S. farmers are increasingly challenged to reduce environmental impacts while maintaining economic viability. Governments and private companies respond by implementing and marketing conservation programs to farmers. Despite considerable expenditures, these efforts have been unable to substantially improve the nation's water quality.

Food companies increasingly market products using terms like *environmentally friendly*, *sustainable*, and *stewardship* with little supporting evidence. Efforts to define and substantiate these claims exist, but they focus on qualitative descriptors such as biodiversity, energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, soil health, and water quality. These descriptors are not tied to specific environmental outcomes and lack practical meaning to farmers and consumers.

The International Water Institute (IWI), a 501c3 non-profit organization that fosters watershed stewardship through leadership in decision support, environmental monitoring and educational programming, believes many of the nation's non-point source water quality issues can be solved through voluntary efforts by farmers.

The IWI partnered with an international fertilizer company, a food-grade soybean marketing firm, a farm management company, a soil scientist, an agronomist, and 10 Midwest farmers to initiate the Stewardship Pilot Program (SPP). The SPP is a novel, farmer-led, approach to address environmental challenges facing agriculture that focuses on decision support to understand relationships between profitability, farming methods, and downstream water quality. The SPP centerpiece is the Field Stewardship Rating (FSR) comprising 14 science-based indices that can be used to *validate* and *measure* environmentally friendly, sustainable, and stewardship claims.

Measurable environmental improvement requires large-scale implementation of the SPP approach. Prior to watershed scale implementation, the IWI must refine and validate the relationship between the FSR and profit, determine the level of producer involvement to achieve desired watershed-scale outcomes, improve decision support products to inform producers, and document the FSR value proposition throughout the food chain.

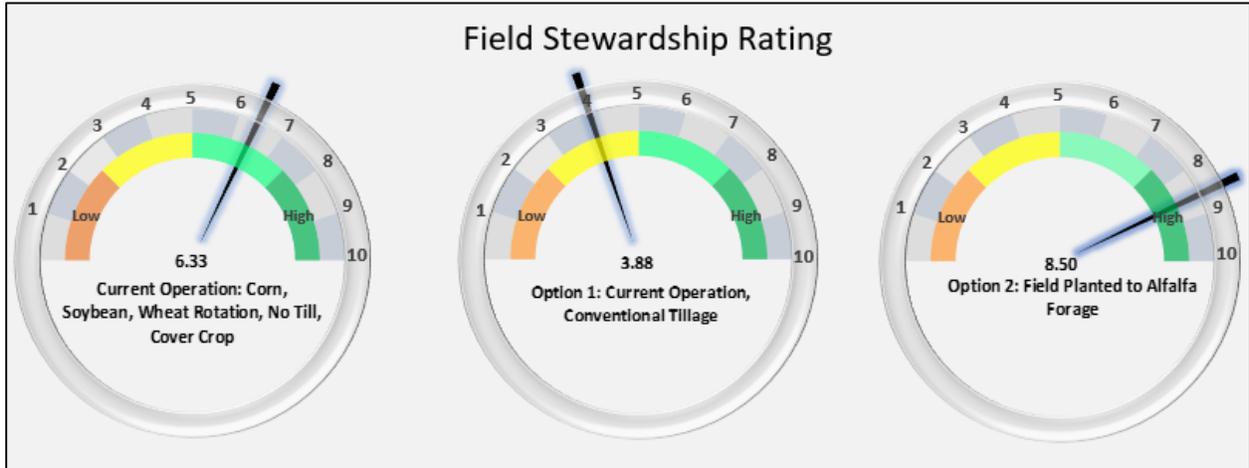
When fully implemented in a watershed, the SPP approach will help address many of the environmental challenges facing American agriculture and allow farmers to better understand the range of viable options to increase their FSR while maintaining profitability. Most importantly, American farmers and food producers can add value to American agricultural products by validating stewardship claims made to consumers worldwide.

For More Information:

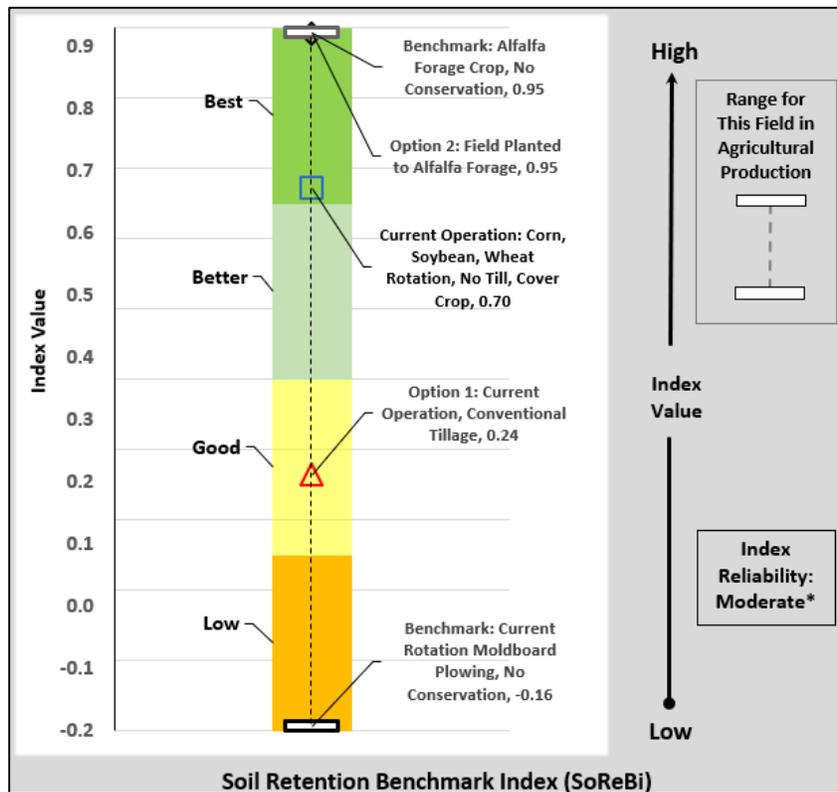
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**Stewardship Pilot Program Products:**



Field Stewardship Rating (FSR) for the current operation and two options (chosen by the farmer).



Soil Retention Benchmark Index (1 of 14 indices comprising the FSR) for the current operation and two options (chosen by the farmer).

\*Each FSR index is weighted: High (3) – No opinion or bias. Well supported by science and research data; Medium (2) Some opinion or bias. Best professional judgment based on moderate to limited science and research data; and Low (1) Considerable opinion or bias. Best professional judgment based on limited science and research data.