



## Validating Stewardship Claims:

*Ensuring a Profitable and Sustainable American Agriculture Industry*

Consumers worldwide are demanding eco-friendly products. Governments and corporations are investing heavily and have established a myriad of incentive programs to improve the Nation's water quality. Despite considerable expenditures, these efforts have been unable to substantially improve the Nation's water quality and governments are increasingly proposing new regulations to mitigate non-point source pollution.

Food companies 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 ten Midwest farmers to initiate a Stewardship Pilot Program (SPP). The SPP is a novel, farmer-led, approach to address environmental challenges facing agriculture focusing on understanding and measuring relationships between changing farming practices, agronomics, and downstream water quality. The SPP centerpiece is the Field Stewardship Rating (FSR) comprising 15 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. The IWI plans to implement the stewardship program in a pilot watershed in 2021. 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 outcomes, improve decision support products to inform producers, and document the FSR value proposition throughout the food chain.

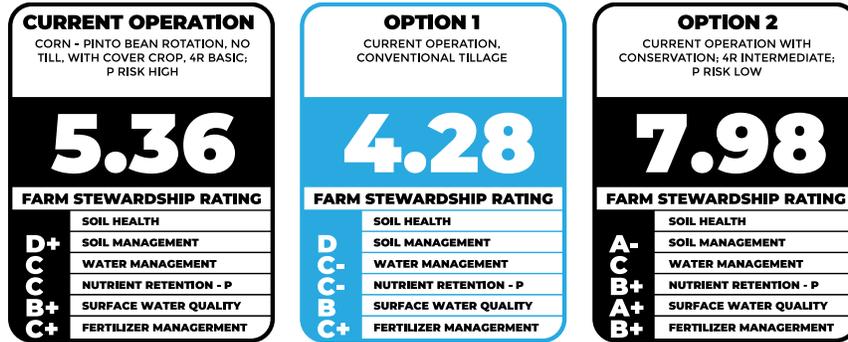
When fully implemented in a watershed, the SPP approach will address many of the environmental challenges facing American agriculture and allow farmers to better understand the range of viable options to increase their FSR while maintaining profitability. Most importantly, American farmers and food producers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

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### Stewardship Pilot Program Products:

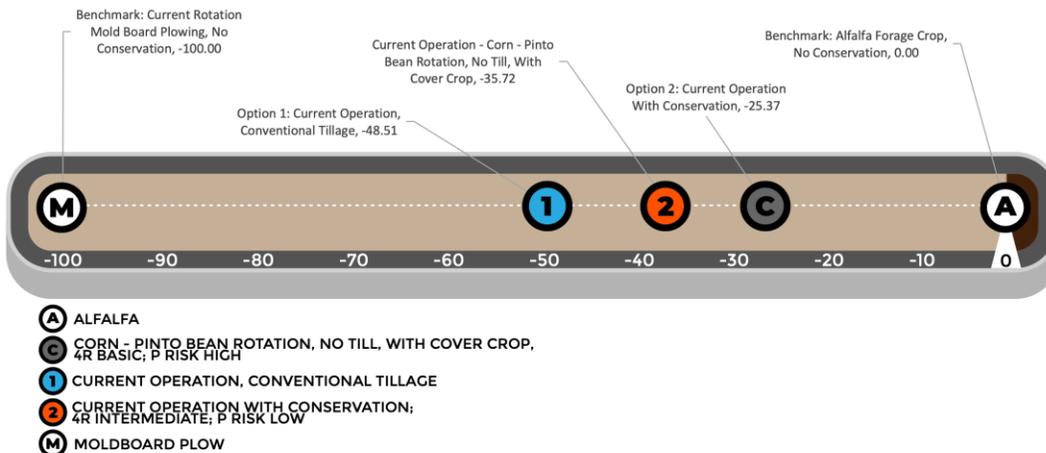


Field Stewardship Rating (FSR) – Field Report Card.



Field Stewardship Rating (FSR) – Benchmarking/Net Profit Relationship.

### Infiltration Index for Agriculture (InnAg)



Infiltration Index (1 of 15 FSR indices).