



PROGRESS REPORT

April 2020

**MIDWEST
ROW CROP**
COLLABORATIVE



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Catalyzing Change for Regenerative Agriculture

As Co-Chairs of the Midwest Row Crop Collaborative, we're excited to share an update on our progress. This report highlights the collective efforts of Collaborative members working together to create the systemic change needed to improve our land, air, and water and the well-being of farmers and rural communities.

Four years ago, the Collaborative arose from a recognition by CEOs of leading companies and nonprofits that the systemic challenges facing our food and agriculture system can only be addressed by working together, leveraging our unique strengths at different points along the food and agriculture value chain.

In our first phase of this work, the Collaborative developed a set of joint projects to apply and learn from new approaches, ranging from on-the-ground practice adoption in key watersheds in the Midwest, to testing new strategies for engaging farmers and consumers, to building the scientific knowledge base around soil health and conservation management. Some of these projects are ongoing, and all of them provided valuable learning to guide the Collaborative's continued work and opportunities to scale impact. The core of this report includes summaries of this work, its impact, and the lessons that we carry forward.

Based on all that we learned, we are thrilled to be moving into a new phase of the Collaborative's work with a redefined theory of change and ambition for enabling systems change. Together, we identified a set of key systemic barriers that hinder the adoption of more sustainable farming practices, including both financial and non-financial risks to farmers in making the transition, a lack of technical and social networks supporting the transition, and insufficient demand and ability for the supply chain to source commodities or small grains produced using these practices.

At a time when agriculture is getting its due recognition as a positive force for addressing urgent challenges like climate change, our collective mission is clear: to empower agriculture as a solution by tackling the barriers that keep the system from shifting to a new model that is part of a healthy environmental ecosystem and economically viable for all in the value chain. Genuine progress that matches the urgency of the challenges facing us demands that we work together, and we applaud members of the Collaborative for their role in jointly developing, funding, and implementing a variety of innovative programs and pilot projects designed to test approaches that can accelerate new solutions.

All of the work that members do together serves a larger purpose—to demonstrate and share project successes, barriers encountered, and lessons learned to inspire action. We recognize the important catalytic impact that the Collaborative can play in enabling broader change throughout the agricultural value chain by openly sharing tools and lessons learned.

The Midwest Row Crop Collaborative moves into 2020 with a renewed sense of purpose and energy for accelerating its work, buoyed by strong member engagement and the election of new Co-Chairs. We want to congratulate the incoming Co-Chairs for the Collaborative, Stefani Millie Grant, Senior Manager, External Affairs and Sustainability at Unilever and Stewart Lindsay, Head of Corporate Engagement, Agriculture & Food at The Nature Conservancy.

It's been an exciting and challenging journey, and a privilege to collaborate with our fellow members as we work together towards a more sustainable Midwest agricultural system. As we accelerate our efforts, we welcome your ideas and are always looking for strong partners aligned with our mission. Let's walk this path together!

Amy Braun Senter

Chief Sustainability Officer
Kellogg Company

Mikel Hancock

Sr. Director of Sustainable
Food & Agriculture
Walmart

Theresa Eberhardt

Project Manager, Supply Chain
Environmental Defense Fund





About the Midwest Row Crop Collaborative

FUTURE-FOCUSED

The world needs innovative solutions to feed a growing population while reducing our impact on the environment. The Midwest Row Crop Collaborative is a unique partnership aligned around a bold, common ambition: to drive positive environmental outcomes in the Upper Mississippi River Basin and to support farmers through improved soil health and increased resilience.

We work together to catalyze innovation among diverse public and private sector partnerships and projects that can accelerate sustainable agricultural solutions.

The Collaborative explores new approaches to agricultural challenges to find solutions that increase productivity while ensuring soil health, protecting water and air quality, addressing the factors contributing to climate change, and supporting farm families. We envision a Midwest agricultural system that is part of a healthy environmental ecosystem and economically viable for all in the value chain.



Ensure healthy soil



Protect water



Address the factors contributing to climate change



Support farm families

“With a mission and membership that is aligned with our work, MRCC plays an important role by demonstrating leadership in supply chain sustainability, removing barriers to change and catalyzing adoption at scale for U.S. row crop agriculture.” Rod Snyder, President, Field to Market: The Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture

REMOVING BARRIERS TO SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Our mission is focused on empowering agriculture as a solution. We incubate and test approaches for removing cost, risk, and knowledge barriers to the implementation of sustainable agricultural practices, with an aim to bring sustainable solutions to scale.

PARTNERSHIP IS ESSENTIAL

The Midwest Row Crop Collaborative is comprised of leading businesses and nonprofits that span the full food and agriculture value chain. We understand that partnerships are vital for catalyzing the innovation needed to drive transformational change.



Our partnerships among public and private organizations place us in a unique position. We have the resources, expertise, and deep experience across the supply chain to develop, fund, and implement cutting-edge programs and pilot projects that can validate and promote sustainable agricultural practices and pave the way for broader change in the agricultural system.

Through the Collaborative, members have strengthened their own strategies and programs over the past four years by deepening relationships with other members and learning from project work together.

Our Theory of Change

The Collaborative has identified a set of key systemic barriers that hinder the adoption of more sustainable farming practices:

- + Financial and non-financial risks to farmers in making the transition
- + Lack of technical and social networks supporting the transition
- + Insufficient demand and ability for the supply chain to source commodities produced using these practices

Our collective project work has produced valuable lessons that led to the identification of five pathways to overcoming these barriers and unlocking change in the system.

1. CONSERVATION FINANCE

Transitioning to new practices may require up-front capital expenditures and several seasons of farming differently before the full economic benefits are realized. Providing access to new lending and other financial products that support farmers through the transition offers one potential mechanism for enabling a broader transition to good farming practices.

2. DE-RISKING PRACTICE ADOPTION FOR FARMERS

In addition to financial risks, producers can run up against obstacles that no amount of lending will overcome. Approaches are needed to reduce and share these risks, be they technical, social, or financial. This might include creating new economic incentives, such as sharing investment in new practice adoption across multiple players in the value chain.

3. ENGAGING AGRICULTURAL RETAILERS TO SUPPORT AND PROMOTE PRACTICE ADOPTION

Producers rely on the knowledge and expertise within their network of trusted advisors, whether their neighbor, agronomist, or agricultural retailer. Agricultural retailers can play an important role as trusted advisors on good farming practices and can serve as a link to a network of conservation experts and knowledge.

4. INNOVATION TO CREATE DEMAND FOR COMMODITIES PRODUCED WITH SOIL HEALTH AND WATER STEWARDSHIP PRACTICES AT SCALE

Farmers raise crops in response to demand from the supply chain. Members of the Collaborative can demonstrate supply chain sourcing practices that leverages multiple parts of the supply chain to support demand for agricultural commodities produced using sustainable practices.

5. ENGAGING CONSUMERS ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

The demand signal sent through the supply chain begins with the consumer. Increased consumer demand for products produced in ways that benefit both the environment and the farmer can stimulate companies to share risk and expand sustainable projects at scale.

Midwest Row Crop Collaborative Theory of Change



Incubate and Test Solutions for Removing Barriers to Adoption of Good Farming Practices



Catalyze Scaled Adoption through Shared Learning

ASPIRATIONAL GOALS

1. 50% of row crop acres in the Mississippi River Basin implementing soil health practices by 2025.
2. Reducing nutrient loading of nitrogen by 41% and phosphorus by 29% from Mississippi River Hypoxia Task Force States by 2035 (as compared to August 2016 baseline).
3. 50% of all irrigation used in the Ogallala aquifer maximizing water conservation to reduce water quantity stress by 2025.

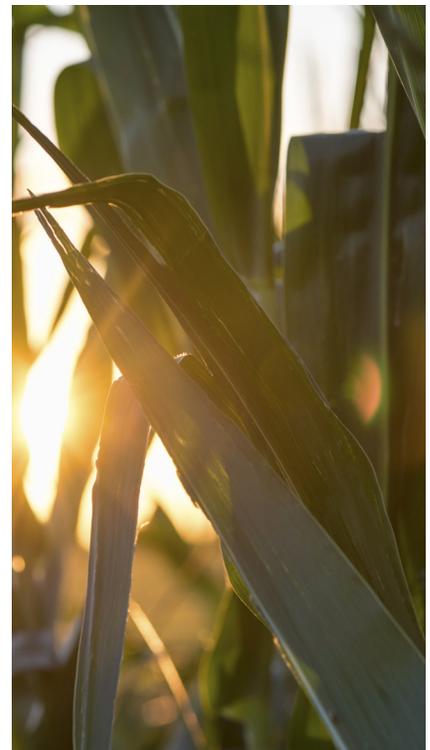


FOCUSING WHERE IT CAN MATTER MOST

The Midwest is vital to the health of our food system.

The Collaborative's work focuses on the heart of row crop agriculture in the US. One of the most intense areas of agricultural production in the world, the Midwest represents a globally unique resource and economically vital area of production. It accounts for 127 million acres of agricultural land, 75% of which is devoted to corn and soybeans according to the USDA.

The region faces growing environmental and economic challenges from climate change and other pressures on the landscape. Over the next three decades, crop yields could decline to levels not seen in 30 years due to an increase in temperatures, extreme rain events, and incidents of drought, and forecasts show real net farm income falling over the next decade. The health of our food system, the environment, and the well-being of farmers will depend on how we tackle these issues in the Midwest.





Shared Learning Across The Full Value Chain

While projects track their direct impact on practice adoption and farm health, the Collaborative recognizes the larger catalytic role that it can play in enabling broader change throughout the value chain. Members hope that by openly sharing tools and lessons learned, they can empower action by many more actors in the agricultural system.



ENABLING A LARGER SHIFT IN THE AGRICULTURAL SYSTEM

We believe that removing barriers to change can unlock a broader shift in the system over the long term that will contribute to a set of larger aspirational goals aligned with the Gulf Hypoxia Task Force.

- + 50 percent of row crop acres in the Mississippi River Basin are implementing soil health practices by 2025.
- + Reduced nutrient loading of nitrogen by 41 percent and phosphorus by 29 percent from Mississippi River Hypoxia Task Force States by 2035, as compared to an August 2016 baseline.
- + 50 percent of all irrigation used in the Ogallala aquifer maximizing water conservation to reduce water quantity stress by 2025.



Our Work

Over the past four years, the Midwest Row Crop Collaborative has put our shared learning and partnership focus into practice to achieve results in many of our systems change pathways. Through these projects, we've facilitated the implementation of over a quarter-million acres of sustainable agriculture practices, have been able to remove risks for farmers by providing data and financial incentives supporting practice adoption, and provided education and awareness about soil health, water quality, and climate mitigation to thousands of practitioners and consumers.

The following case summaries highlight some of the Collaborative's projects and demonstrate the importance of working across different dimensions of systems change in the agricultural system.

- + Educating Trusted Advisors on Sustainable Agriculture: SPARC
- + Investing in Partnerships for Soil Health
- + Advancing Practice Adoption in the Upper Sangamon River
- + Empowering Farmers in the Middle Cedar River
- + Supporting Public Policy for Conservation Practices
- + Improving Water Quality in the Midwest
- + Engaging Consumers with Future Farmers of America



Project Facts

TIMELINE



Status: **COMPLETE**

COLLABORATIVE MEMBERS

Cargill	Unilever
Environmental	Walmart
Defense Fund	World
Kellogg	Wildlife
Company	Fund
The Nature	
Conservancy	

FUNDED PARTNERS

Field to Market

OTHER PARTNERS

National Association of
Agricultural Educators (NAAE)

PROJECT SUMMARY

SYSTEMS CHANGE PATHWAY(S)

+ **Engaging Agricultural Retailers**

GOALS

- + Work with the agricultural retail and Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) community to identify gaps in training and awareness on conservation and sustainable farming practices.
- + Help these trusted advisers to farmers better understand why a dynamic shift in consumer interest will impact their business and service offerings.
- + Help trusted advisers continue to embrace a business philosophy that relies on knowledge and service more than just price of product.

APPROACH

Create training modules that agricultural retail cooperatives can distribute for training and host link on ARA and ASA website for advisers to use for linking to educational materials and modules.

ACTIVITIES

- + Created educational resources to empower advisors to support farmers in sustainable practices
- + Used classrooms to provide continuing education units for CCAs, offering trackable hours of continuing education
- + Classes include: Sustainability 101, Environmental Metrics, Practices that Support Sustainable Agronomy, Measuring Success, The Farmer Business Case, and Developing a Sustainability Program
- + Developed 8 factsheets

KEY OUTCOMES

- + Created farmer-facing toolkit & Resource Guide
- + "Know the Issues" Guides
- + 8 environmental indicators measured by Fieldprint Calculator
- + Companion manual to online modules for "Developing a Sustainability Program"
- + Learning exchange microsite developed
- + Launched at 2018 Sustainable Agronomy Conference
- + Online modules for CCAs and Agricultural Retailers
- + Created two Economic Case Studies

Project Insights

- +A large opportunity still exists to bridge the gap in communications from food and agriculture companies to trusted advisers to farmers.
- +Many retailers feel they are left out of sustainability conversations at the corporate level and are not engaged in implementing programs on farm.
- +Engaging with trusted advisers in a way that respects their agronomic knowledge is key and starting with a science-based conversation that ties into consumer expectations and trends is helpful to bridge the business and understanding gap.
- +The majority of trusted advisers are not comfortable talking about practice change outside of seed hybrid selection and chemical use. They feel their business and trusted relationship could be harmed if the farmer has a negative experience.
- +Bridging these gaps and continuing to influence large agricultural retail locations and CCAs will help to keep them connected to the consumer and ultimately benefit all in the supply chain.

ABOUT THE MIDWEST ROW CROP COLLABORATIVE

The Midwest Row Crop Collaborative is an innovative partnership aligned to drive positive environmental change in the upper Mississippi River Basin. It is comprised of leading businesses and nonprofits that span the full food and agriculture value chain, working together to catalyze and implement joint, systemic projects and initiatives that accelerate sustainable agricultural solutions.

ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVE

Environmental Initiative is a nonprofit organization that works with business, nonprofit and government leaders to develop collaborative solutions to environmental problems. In 2019, Environmental Initiative became the administrator of the Midwest Row Crop Collaborative.

INVESTING IN PARTNERSHIPS FOR SOIL HEALTH



Project Facts

TIMELINE



Status:

ONGOING

Funded by
Collaborative
through Jan.
2019

COLLABORATIVE MEMBERS

All members

FUNDED PARTNERS

Soil Health Partnership (SHP)

PROJECT SUMMARY

SYSTEMS CHANGE PATHWAY(S)

- + **De-risking Practice Adoption**
- + **Demand for Commodities Produced Using Good Farming Practices**

GOALS

- + Quantify environmental and economic benefits of practices that support soil health
- + Expand soil health farm network, staff, and analytical capability

APPROACH

Continually gather data from growing season regarding planting, tillage, chemical use, machinery, harvesting, and farm drainage and its impact on soil health.

ACTIVITIES

- + Grew Farm Network across IA, IL, and NE, reaching 114 partner sites by 2018
- + 25 farms at new Associate Level for researching impact on soil on farm by 2018
- + Partnered with National Wheat Foundation to strengthen research
- + Partnered with General Mills on wheat in Indiana and Illinois in 2017, expanding to eastern IA, WI, and MN in 2018
- + Over 26,400 soil samples between 2014 and 2018
- + Provided customized data to over 90 growers
- + 24 field days and over 40 other collaborative events in 2018
- + Training for over 250 agronomists at first ever sustainability conference for certified crop consultants in 2018

KEY OUTCOMES

- + Beginning in 2018, statistically significant year over year comparisons are now possible, with more than 80 farms having multi-year comparisons
- + Cost analysis and budget comparisons for management decisions available for individual farmers
- + Growing awareness of soil health with 1 billion media impressions in 2018, tripling from previous year through partner engagement

Project Insights

- + Soil Health Partnership has been successful in engaging farmers by grounding the program in something that farmers are interested in – the health of their soil.
- + As a program of the National Corn Growers Association, SHP is supported by multiple farmer organizations, creating a “pull” for their service from farmers.

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ADVANCING PRACTICE ADOPTION IN THE UPPER SANGAMON RIVER



Project Facts

TIMELINE



Status: **ONGOING**

COLLABORATIVE MEMBERS

Cargill PepsiCo
Kellogg The Nature
Company Conservancy

FUNDED PARTNERS

Illinois Corn Growers Association
Precision Conservation
Management
(PCM)

OTHER PARTNERS

Mars Petcare
Nestle Purina
Illinois Council on Best
Management Practices
Bunge
Walton Family Foundation

PROJECT SUMMARY

SYSTEMS CHANGE PATHWAY(S)

- + **De-risking Practice Adoption**
- + **Engaging Agricultural Retailers**
- + **Demand for Commodities Produced Using Good Farming Practices**

GOALS

- + Enroll at least 100,000 acres in nutrient management, tillage, and cover crops
- + Build Precision Conservation Management (PCM) capacity to demonstrate improved performance and provide agronomic advice
- + Build business case for good farming practices and share learning

APPROACH

- +PepsiCo and Bunge recruit farmers, PCM enrolls farmers gathers data, provides data compilation, economic analysis options, and agronomic advice. PepsiCo provides cover crop cost share.
- +Address the need in Illinois to increase the number of farmers, retailers, Certified Crop Advisors (CCAs), and conservation practitioners who understand the science of soil health and the interrelated set of production management changes required to transition to this new system.

ACTIVITIES

- + Lead and motivate local partners to coordinate action at the watershed and state level
- + Develop relationships with growers
- + Develop conservation programs and incentives
- + Outreach to grower groups & local agencies
- + PCM measures environmental outcomes, such as improved water quality and GHG reductions, while providing farmers with an analysis of how implementing sustainable agricultural practices impacts profitability.
- + Provided intensive, hands-on training for farmer advisors, retailers, and conservation practitioners about soil health practices, such as cover crops and reduced tillage, and management strategies for shifting production to soil health system.
- + Offered 12,000 acres of cover crop cost share for PCM participants in fall of 2018

KEY OUTCOMES

- + Enrolled 30 farmer participants in year one, scaling to 50 in year two with farmer uptake of cover cropping and a variety of reduced tillage practices
- + 3 new counties, 27 farmers entered program
- + Expanded Advanced Soil Health Training, with 25 farmers completing
- + Created sister program: Advanced Conservation Drainage Program, with 45 farmers and drainage industry reps completing training

Project Insights

- + Agronomic and economic advice is critical alongside data gathering
- + Farmer to Farmer networks could use better definition in what works and where to grow
- + Many local implementers need to remain nutrient management agnostic

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Project Facts

TIMELINE



Status: **COMPLETE**

COLLABORATIVE MEMBERS

Cargill
The Nature Conservancy

FUNDED PARTNERS

Iowa Department of Agriculture
and Land Stewardship
Iowa Agricultural Water Alliance
Black Hawk Soil and
Water Conservation District
Miller Creek Water
Quality Improvement Project
4R Plus

OTHER PARTNERS

Practical Farmers of Iowa

PROJECT SUMMARY

SYSTEMS CHANGE PATHWAY(S)

- + **De-risking practice adoption**
- + **Engaging Agricultural Retailers**

GOALS

- + Establish on the ground presence to test strategies
- + Increase farmers' awareness and knowledge of soil health, conservation, and nutrient stewardship practices
- + Help local watershed groups reduce shortfall in financial assistance for conservation practices that address growing demand for additional cost share

APPROACH

Tie together 4R Plus with local initiative, Miller Creek Challenge, to provide financial support to integrate new conservation practices in the Middle Cedar River Watershed.

ACTIVITIES

- + Lead and motivate local partners to coordinate action at the watershed and state level
- + Develop relationships with growers
- + Develop conservation programs and incentives
- + Outreach to grower groups & local agencies
- + Funding support for Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Water Quality Initiative in two sub-watersheds of Middle Cedar River Watershed
- + Technical and financial assistance to watershed coordinator
- + Provide cost-share funding to farmers to implement practices

KEY OUTCOMES

- + Provided watershed coordinator capability to deliver technical and financial assistance to watershed
- + Additional 17 farmers signed up for Water Quality Initiative cost share program, with more than 3,700 acres of cover crops and 1,500 acres of no-till/strip till
- + Strengthened relationships with Miller Creek Advisory Council, which is now looking to start its own cover crop business
- + Hosted Cover Crop Summit, bringing in local experts throughout the cover crop supply chain, including seed sales professionals, cooperatives, watershed partners, National Resource Conservation Service, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and farmers
- + Developed white paper to capture most relevant solutions that can reduce barriers and provide incentives for cover crop expansion
- + Campaign materials reached 85-90% of farmers in Middle Cedar & across IA
- + 130 Certified Crop Advisors took 600 4R Plus Continuing Education Unit courses earning 300 CEU credits
- + Estimated 50 farmers/advisors directly reached and indirectly another 3,300 farmers in the watershed

Project Insights

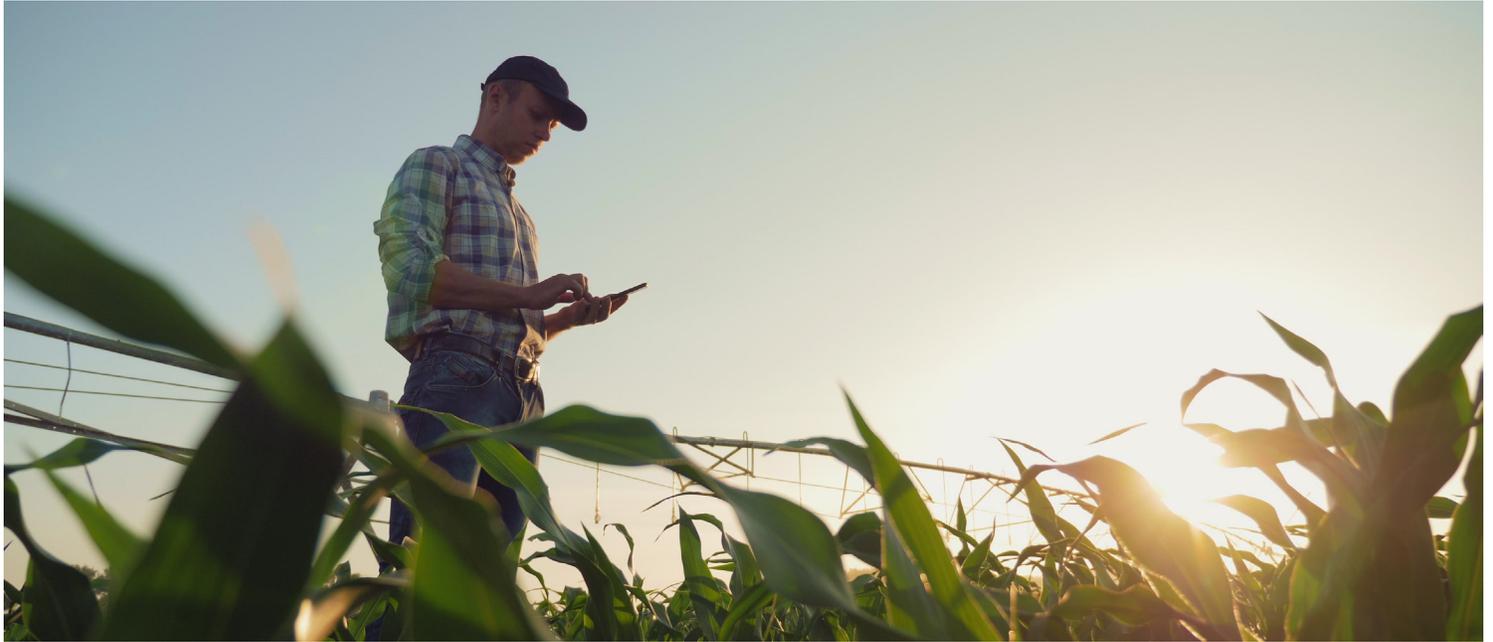
- + There is interest in pursuing cover crops as an economic growth opportunity for local enterprising farmers. The economic development aspect might provide non-traditional partners with opportunities to develop cover crop production in IA.
- + Certain financial, legal, and technical barriers will need to be addressed. Some of these are low hanging fruit that could quickly be addressed. Others, like a strengthened secondary market for small grains, are more complicated, requiring collaboration of a variety of partners throughout the supply chain.

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Project Facts

TIMELINE



Status: **COMPLETE**

COLLABORATIVE MEMBERS

All members

FUNDED PARTNERS

Keystone Policy Institute

PROJECT SUMMARY

SYSTEMS CHANGE PATHWAY(S)

- + **Conservation Finance**
- + **De-Risking Practice Adoption**
- + **Demand for Commodities Produced using Good Farming Practices**

GOALS

- + Accelerate innovation and scalability of in-field and edge-of-field conservation practices that improve water quality and soil health.
- + Strengthen soil health and water quality research and data collection to improve the adoption of conservation practices, impact of on farm conservation practices, and measurement of outcomes.
- + Improve opportunities for public private partnerships to drive implementation of conservation practices.

APPROACH

Take at least three joint advocacy actions in support of efforts to develop policy to improve water quality and soil health.

ACTIVITIES

- + Developed Midwest Row Crop Collaborative policy priorities
- + Briefing in Iowa with Iowa Soybean Association and Iowa Corn Growers in January 2018 to share Collaborative Policy Priorities and obtain feedback on the watershed approach as well as Iowa-specific proposed legislation
- + Letter to the Iowa legislature submitted January 2018 in support of funding for private lands solutions to water quality
- + Soil Health Reception policy briefing in Washington, D.C. in January 2018
- + Three state-focused briefings (IA, IL, NE) in Washington, D.C. in April 2018 focused on soil health and water quality
- + Published state policy priorities to improve water quality in state of IA
- + Published federal policy priorities for farm bill

KEY OUTCOMES

- + Through its initial policy work, the Collaborative established a basis for continued dialogue on important policy levers for systems change
 - + In 2020, the Collaborative is planning a Policy Forum focused on identifying opportunities for members to support sustainable agriculture policies that break down the barriers identified in the Collaborative's theory of change
-

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Project Facts

TIMELINE



Status: **ONGOING**

COLLABORATIVE MEMBERS

Bayer The Nature
Environmental Conservancy
Defense World Wildlife
Fund Fund

FUNDED PARTNERS

Iowa Agriculture Water Alliance
Iowa Department of Agriculture
Land Stewardship

OTHER PARTNERS

General Mills
Field to Market

PROJECT SUMMARY

SYSTEMS CHANGE PATHWAY(S)

+ **De-Risking Practice Adoption**

GOALS

- + Work with state level partners to improve water quality in IA and IL
- + 50,000 cover crop acres planted

APPROACH

- + On-the-ground practice implementation to increase delivery of conservation information and demonstrate environmental and economic value of sustainable practices

KEY OUTCOMES

- + 256,000 acres of cover crops
 - + 634 acres conservation cover
 - + More than 12,000 Drainage Water Management Plans
 - + 931 acres of wetland restoration
-

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Project Facts

TIMELINE



Status: **COMPLETE**

COLLABORATIVE MEMBERS

Cargill
Environmental
Defense Fund
Kellogg Company
The Nature
Conservancy

Unilever
Walmart
World Wildlife
Fund

FUNDED PARTNERS

Future Farmers of America (FFA)

OTHER PARTNERS

National Association of
Agricultural Educators (NAAE)

PROJECT SUMMARY

SYSTEMS CHANGE PATHWAY(S)

+ Consumer Engagement

GOALS

- + Educate consumers about farmers as a solution
- + Create a funding model for farm investments by driving sales
- + Engage young prospective farmers about the benefits of conservation for early intervention
- + Enable Future Farmers of America (FFA) as a strong partner to develop and deliver training

APPROACH

Two-week marketing campaign inside 240 Walmart stores in Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska to educate future farmers on good farming practices supporting air, water, and soil health.

ACTIVITIES

- + Created an agriculture education toolkit that reached 1,000 Future Farmers of America students by the end of 2019
- + Developed a teaching toolkit
 - + Curricular materials for agriculture educators to demonstrate sustainability principles
 - + NAEF teachers piloted and evaluated effectiveness of toolkit
- + Two trademark applications filed for the FFA consumer activation in-store campaign

KEY OUTCOMES

- + Positive sales results (5%-22% based on brand)
- + Sustainability curriculum piloted with 18 teachers, touching 392 students
- + 83% of teachers responded they would continue to implement the lessons in the future

Project Insights

- + Challenging to coordinate brands
- + Resonated with consumers and drove sales
- + Need to be clear on data expectations with partners in advance
- + Streamline by not requiring all brands to coordinate on a topic in-store

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On the Horizon

In addition to the projects the Midwest Row Crop Collaborative has already undertaken, we are driving ahead on several additional scopes of work to achieve our vision through our theory of change. Some of these projects include:

Agricultural Conservation Finance

Building on the success of the Forum on Conservation Finance in Agriculture that the Collaborative hosted in 2019, members have been experimenting with corporate supported lending products to remove financial barriers and risks for farmers to implement sustainable farming practices.

Consumer Engagement

The Collaborative has begun to dig deeper into the connection between consumers, sustainable agriculture, and farmers and how those connections drive decision making across the supply chain. Members are planning a forum focused on the topic of consumer engagement in 2020.

Cover Crop Commercialization

We've begun exploring creating innovative solutions for farmers to grow cover crops as a cash crop, evolving from models for providing direct incentives for farmers to plant cover crops.

Engaging the Next Level of Agricultural Retailers

Members are exploring how to build on the success of SPARC to develop the next level of agricultural retailer training, with enhanced methods for reaching more retailers and providing access to a supportive network.

Multi-off Takers

Members have begun to develop mechanisms for sharing costs and risks across the supply chain to continue to remove barriers and create incentives for farmers to implement sustainable agriculture strategies.



.....
Test approaches by removing barriers to adoption



.....
Support scaled adoption through shared learning



.....
Strategic partnerships and engagement



.....
Influence systems change through a leadership voice



JOIN US

The Collaborative is continually exploring new ideas and approaches. Partnership with thought leaders and practitioners is needed to reach the level of impact we aspire to. Connect with us to advance these ideas or to see if we can advance your big idea.

Working together, Midwest Row Crop Collaborative members and partners are able to:

- + Take collective action across the value chain to remove barriers to systems change
- + Build and deepen relationships with leading companies and NGOs, identifying areas of mutual interest for collaboratively testing new approaches, with opportunities to share costs and risks
- + Learn about challenges and solutions for overcoming barriers, helping to inform strategies and project approaches
- + More efficiently link with stakeholders in other parts of the value chain, from the consumer to producer level
- + Create an evidence base for practice adoption and share lessons learned with the broader agricultural system
- + Create a shared vision and send a strong signal to shift the sector



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The Midwest Row Crop Collaborative is an innovative partnership aligned to drive positive environmental change in the upper Mississippi River Basin. It is comprised of leading businesses and nonprofits that span the full food and agriculture value chain, working together to catalyze and implement joint, systemic projects and initiatives that accelerate sustainable agricultural solutions.

ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVE



Environmental Initiative is a nonprofit organization that works with business, nonprofit and government leaders to develop collaborative solutions to environmental problems. In 2019, Environmental Initiative became the administrator of The Midwest Row Crop Collaborative.

**MIDWEST
ROW CROP**
COLLABORATIVE