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NEWS RELEASE

Soybean Checkoff Invests in Sustainable Agriculture

United Soybean Board Committed to Raising Awareness of Importance of Sustainability

ST. LOUIS (April 22, 2009) – The United Soybean Board (USB) and soybean checkoff are proud to serve on the steering committee for Field to Market, the Keystone Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture. The soybean checkoff will provide nearly \$160,000 in funding to Field to Market, whose steering committee is a diverse group of grower organizations, agribusinesses, food companies and conservation groups.

As part of a broader effort to measure and support agriculture’s progress against key environmental and socioeconomic sustainability indicators, Field to Market will provide farmers an online source to gauge the sustainability of their operations and access information on practices that can improve their efficiency and protect their local environment.

In addition, USB’s sustainability initiative is committed to helping improve the U.S. soybean industry’s environmental footprint. Doug Goehring, a USB director and team lead for USB’s sustainability initiative, said part of the initiative’s task is raising awareness of the importance of sustainability.

“The sustainability initiative is focused on how to communicate our message of sustainability to audiences throughout the world,” said Goehring, who raises soybeans, corn and wheat on his no-till farm in Menoken, N.D. “Sustainability is in its infancy and moving forward carefully. It’s more important than people think. It covers everything – production, biofuels, new uses, marketing – sustainability is a central point in everything we do.”

Field to Market will soon launch a trial version of its Fieldprint Calculator, a free online sustainability tool. Goehring has been part of the planning process for the online calculator, making suggestions to improve a tool that will eventually be capable of computing sustainability for U.S. commodity crop producers.

“It’s kind of a work in progress,” Goehring said of the calculator. “They’ve collected a lot of thoughts from many growers. I know the designers are taking those suggestions into consideration and trying to make it valuable for every grower in the United States. I think, as the calculator evolves, it will really be a valuable tool and be able to impact this issue. It’ll really be able to help us measure where we are as an industry.”

The calculator analyzes the use of natural resources, such as land, topsoil and water, and key inputs, such as energy, plant nutrients and crop protection products. Growers can answer a series of simple questions about their operation, and, in as little as 15 minutes, understand how they compare with others in their region or across the country.



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In addition to the calculator, www.fielddtomarket.org will provide a resources page where farmers can come together to share advice and tips, all with the goal of determining which sustainability practices make the most sense for their individual operations.

With the release of the trial version, Field to Market will welcome input from users of the calculator to help adapt the tool to suit individual needs. By participating and providing feedback, farmers can help shape the industry's sustainability effort instead of being subject to prescriptions in the future.

"We are sustainable; we've been practicing it," Goehring said. "The technology is just catching up with us. We're trying to proactively define and measure our industry in an effort to showcase what we're doing already as an industry. We've made great strides in production agriculture in this country, and we'll continue to perfect that."

USB is made up of 68 farmer-directors who oversee the investments of the soybean checkoff on behalf of all U.S. soybean farmers. Checkoff funds are invested in the areas of animal utilization, human utilization, industrial utilization, industry relations, market access and supply. As stipulated in the Soybean Promotion, Research and Consumer Information Act, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service has oversight responsibilities for USB and the soybean checkoff.

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