Field to Market: The Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture®

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Subject: Authorship of Biodiversity Chapter for the 2026 National Indicators Report

Issued By: Field to Market: The Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture

Date: February 24, 2026

Project Sponsor: The Mosaic Company

Submit proposals to: Eric Coronel, Ph.D. Director of Science and Research (science@fieldtomarket.org)

Deadline for Submissions: March 20, 2026, 11 PM EST

Organization Overview

Field to Market: The Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture is a trusted, non-profit alliance that brings together a diverse group of stakeholders from across the entire agricultural value chain to define, measure, and advance regenerative and sustainable agriculture. Field to Market members include nearly 180 agribusinesses, grower organizations, brands, retailers, civil society organizations, and affiliate organizations that move the needle on an industry level to more sustainably- and regeneratively-produced food, feed, fiber, and fuel in the United States.

Field to Market's vision is to support resilient ecosystems and enhance farmer livelihoods by convening the agriculture industry and leading quality conversations that facilitate partnership action to enhance resilient outcomes; creating a trusted suite of credible and transparent metrics and providing the value chain with a comprehensive and accessible platform for resilient solutions; and delivering accessible programs to test innovative answers to sustainability and regenerative challenges through educational and project resources. Our widely-used resources include the Fieldprint Platform®, a pioneering on-farm environmental assessment framework, and the National Indicators Report®.

Project Background: The 2026 National Indicators Report

The National Indicators Report (NIR), published every five years by Field to Market, provides a comprehensive, independent, and peer-reviewed assessment of environmental outcomes across U.S. commodity agriculture. Covering more than 300 million acres of cropland with 40+ years of data, it serves as a critical resource for farmers, researchers, industry, and policymakers to measure sustainability progress.

The upcoming 2026 edition will expand to cover 15 major crops. While the core of the report tracks quantitative trends in indicators including land use and soil erosion, the 2026 edition will also feature **contextual indicator** chapters for topics where annual quantitative trends are not currently feasible but are critical for long-term success of crop production. **Biodiversity** is one of these critical contextual indicators.

Scope of Work

Field to Market seeks a lead scientist or researcher, working independently or as part of a team, to complete two related but distinct workstreams for the biodiversity chapter of the 2026 National Indicators Report (NIR). Eligible applicants may be affiliated with a corporation, non-profit organization, university, research institution, or may be an independent researcher.

The scope of both workstreams is commodity row crop production in the contiguous U.S. over approximately the last 45 years. Historically, Field to Market's focus has been on terrestrial (above-ground) biodiversity. Authors are encouraged to also consider below-ground, freshwater, and marine biodiversity as impacted by row commodity crop production.

Workstream 1: Contextual Indicator Chapter

The previous NIR (2021) identified concerning trends, such as a decline in bird populations associated with farmland and a drop in wild bee abundance. The goal of the 2026 chapter is to move beyond trend documentation to provide actionable insights and solutions based on the latest science.

The successful applicant will conduct a comprehensive state-of-the-science review to build a foundation for science-based solutions that help producers stabilize and restore biodiversity while maintaining productive yields.

The chapter must follow Field to Market's Contextual Indicators Framework, described below with topic-specific guidance for each section.

A. **Current State of Knowledge**: Establish the scientific foundation by addressing:

- Definitions of biodiversity relevant to agricultural systems (genetic, species, and ecosystem diversity).
- Available methods and metrics for measuring biodiversity in cropland landscapes, including remote sensing and other monitoring technologies. Describe their strengths, limitations, and scalability.

- An overview of major standards and frameworks that could guide indicator development, such as the Science-Based Targets Network (SBTN), the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD), and One Planet Business for Biodiversity (OP2B), among others.
- Primary data gaps and barriers preventing regular, standardized monitoring.

B. **Trends and Evidence**: Synthesize biodiversity trends across U.S. croplands over approximately the past 45 years, drawing on publicly available datasets and peer-reviewed literature. Address:
    - Documented improvements and losses across different taxa, regions, and cropping systems.
    - How trends vary across different regions and production systems.
    - Realistic benchmarks or targets, if any, and how current conditions compare.
C. **Connections and Context**: Describe how biodiversity intersects with other environmental and socio-economic concerns, including:
    - Linkages between biodiversity and the core indicators Field to Market tracks annually (e.g., land use, soil erosion, greenhouse gas emissions).
    - Ecosystem services provided by agricultural biodiversity (e.g., pollination, pest regulation, soil health).
D. **Challenges and Opportunities**: Examine the practical realities facing commodity crop producers:
    - Economic implications and trade-offs of biodiversity-supportive practices.
    - Areas of agreement and divergence among stakeholder groups (farmers, industry, environmental organizations, policymakers).
E. **Solutions and Actions**: Identify practices and policies with the strongest evidence for measurable biodiversity benefits:
    - Management practices with robust evidence of positive impact (e.g., cover cropping, integrated pest management, crop rotation, agroforestry, habitat restoration).

- Current and proposed U.S. regulations relevant to biodiversity in crop production, including the Endangered Species Act, USDA conservation programs, and the Farm Bill.
- Biodiversity incentive mechanisms and credits in voluntary markets.
- Key organizations and initiatives advancing this work.

F. **Outlook**: Describe the trajectory of the field:

- Emerging technologies and approaches that could improve future measurement and management (e.g., acoustic monitoring, remote sensing).
- Future developments the agricultural community should monitor.

Workstream 2: WILD Index Scientific Evaluation

In addition to the Contextual Indicator Chapter, the contractor must provide a scientific evaluation to guide the future revision of Field to Market's current biodiversity indicator, the *Habitat Potential Index* (HPI). Field to Market has proposed transitioning the HPI into a new *Wildlife and Landscape Diversity* (WILD) Index to better meet member needs for rigorous, scalable measurement. While the WILD Index implementation is currently paused, the scientific review should evaluate the evidence supporting the core principles of this proposed shift. For a future edition of the NIR, Field to Market plans to transition to use the same biodiversity indicator for the Fieldprint Platform as for the National Indicators Report.

The contractor should assess the strength of the scientific literature on the following six topics and provide recommendations for each:

Task	Title	WILD Component(s)	Weakness Identified by Members
A	Semi-Natural Cover as Biodiversity Proxy	Semi-natural cover (25 pts), vegetation diversity, size ratio	Patch size bias, existing habitat credit, native vs. introduced species, rice habitat
B	Landscape Complexity as Moderator	Landscape diversity multiplier (SHDI)	Developed land in SHDI, regional baseline, linear multiplier defensibility

C	Management Practices as Biodiversity Proxies	IPM (10 pts), rotation (6 pts), cover crops (5 pts), tillage (5 pts)	IPM questionnaire validity, winter wheat, summer covers, double counting, regional IPM
D	Cropland Conversion Penalty Calibration	Conversion penalty (−4 to −1)	Penalty too lenient or too harsh, CRP transitions, tenure fairness
E	Component Interactions and Weighting	All components; overall formula structure	Opaque weights, compensability, farm size bias, redundancy
F	Feasibility of Empirical Cross-Validation	Overall metric validity	No outcome link, need for ground truthing, trust and adoption

This evaluation may be integrated into the chapter where appropriate or delivered as a standalone technical memo, at the contractor's discretion and in consultation with Field to Market staff.

Required Reading

1. Biodiversity chapters for 2016 and 2021 National Indicators Reports.
2. Current biodiversity indicator documentation.
3. Proposed 2023 biodiversity indicator.
    a. Proposal
    b. Public comments to understand member perspectives
    c. Workshops

Deliverables

The selected contractor will be responsible for the following deliverables:

Workstream 1 Deliverables

1. **Contextual Indicator Chapter**: The full text of the biodiversity chapter, organized according to the Contextual Indicators Framework sections A–F (estimated length under 40 pages, not including figures and tables). Field to Market can assist in harmonizing figures with the report's branding.
2. **Stakeholder Summary**: A concise summary of key findings for practitioners and non-scientists.

3. **Practice Guide**: A description of the management practices with the strongest evidence for biodiversity stabilization and improvement, suitable for use in outreach materials.
4. **Research Recommendations**: A prioritized list of research needs to address critical data gaps.
5. **Bibliography**: A comprehensive list of all reviewed peer-reviewed literature and government/NGO reports.

Workstream 2 Deliverables

1. **WILD Index Scientific Evaluation:** An assessment of the topics described in Workstream 2 under Scope of Work, including clear recommendations for the future revision of Field to Market's biodiversity indicator. This may be delivered as a section within the chapter or as a standalone technical memo.

Intellectual Property

Intellectual property for the final deliverables will be owned by Field to Market. Authors retain the right to publish findings derived from their independent scientific analysis in peer-reviewed literature, provided they do not reproduce substantial portions of the NIR chapter verbatim without Field to Market's consent. Authors will be prominently credited in all published versions of the chapter and communications campaign.

Timeline

Work is expected to commence immediately upon contract signing. The anticipated timeline is as follows:

- **Project Start:** April 2026
- **First Draft:** Due by **mid-July 2026** to allow for internal review. Revisions are expected at this stage.
- **Draft for Peer Review:** Must be completed by **early August 2026**. Revisions are expected after external peer review.
- **Complete Final Draft with Revisions:** By early November
- **Publication target:** December 2026

Proposal Submission Requirements

Interested parties should submit a proposal not exceeding 5 pages (excluding CVs) containing the following to Eric Coronel, Ph.D. Director of Science and Research (science@fieldtomarket.org) by March 20, 2026:

1. **Team Qualifications:** CVs of lead scientist(s) demonstrating expertise in agricultural biodiversity, landscape ecology, and related fields. Experience with U.S. row crop agriculture is required.
2. **Methodology:** A brief description of how the team will conduct the systematic literature review and ensure the content addresses the Contextual Indicators Framework.
3. **Work Plan:** A timeline including key milestones and check-ins with Field to Market staff.
4. **Budget Narrative:** Applicants should provide a budget breakdown organized by the following components:

Component	Description
Literature review and synthesis	Workstream 1, Framework sections A–B: systematic review, data compilation, and trend analysis
Contextual analysis, solutions, and outlook	Workstream 1, Framework sections C–F: cross-cutting analysis, practice evaluation, policy review, and outlook
Stakeholder summary and practice guide	Plain-language summary and practitioner-oriented practice guide
WILD Index scientific evaluation	Workstream 2: assessment of the indicator revision topics and written recommendations
Revisions	First draft revisions based on Field to Market review and post-peer-review revisions

5. **Writing Samples:** Samples of previous work demonstrating the ability to translate complex scientific concepts for a broad agricultural audience.
6. **Conflict of Interest Disclosure:** To maintain the credibility and transparency of this work, applicants must disclose conflicts of interest with entities that may have a material interest in the findings of the biodiversity chapter.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Scientific expertise and credibility of the applicants.
- Demonstrated understanding of biodiversity in the context of U.S. commodity agriculture.
- Cost-effectiveness.
- Ability to produce high-quality, readable synthesis reports.

Generative Artificial Intelligence Guidelines

Field to Market supports the responsible use of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to enhance research and writing. We encourage successful applicants to leverage AI tools to their maximum capability to support the literature review, data synthesis, and drafting processes. However, the use of AI must be governed by a strict adherence to scientific integrity and human expertise.

Applicants are encouraged to utilize AI tools to:

- **Broaden the Scope:** Efficiently scan and categorize the vast volume of peer-reviewed literature and government reports to ensure the comprehensive state of the science review required for this project.
- **Synthesize Trends:** Assist in identifying patterns regarding biodiversity trends, management practice effectiveness, and regional variations.
- **Enhance Readability:** Utilize tools to help translate complex scientific concepts into accessible language for the Stakeholder Summary deliverable, ensuring the content is readable for a broad agricultural audience.

Required Safeguards

While AI may be used as a tool, it cannot replace the scientific judgment of the researchers. The final deliverables must reflect the contractor's best knowledge and deep understanding of U.S. agricultural systems.

- **Verification of Accuracy:** The National Indicators Report is a trusted resource and a peer-reviewed assessment. Therefore, all AI-generated content must be verified against source documents. The contractor is responsible for ensuring no hallucinated citations or data points are included. Field to Market maintains a zero-tolerance policy for hallucinated citations and content. Field to Market reserves the right to manually

verify all references, and the submission of non-existent data points will be considered a material breach of agreement.

- **Contextual Nuance:** AI might struggle with the specific trade-offs and economic implications of production systems. The contractor must apply human expertise to ensure the content accurately reflects the complex interplay of factors influencing biodiversity in U.S. commodity agriculture.
- **Final Accountability:** The selected scientist(s) will serve as the named author(s) and must vouch for the accuracy, independence, and credibility of the work.

In alignment with Field to Market's core value of transparency, proposals should briefly outline how the team intends to utilize AI tools within their methodology (Section 8 of this RFP).

For additional guidelines, please reference Best Practices in Using Generative AI in Research (University of Illinois).

Terms and Conditions

Field to Market reserves the right to accept or reject any qualification responses, waive informalities, negotiate with selected vendors, or cancel this RFP as a whole or in part. Submission costs are the vendor's sole expense and will not be reimbursed. Participation in this RFP does not guarantee future consideration or award.