Sustainable intensification (SI) was recently announced as one of three key Science Frontiers for ASA (http://bit.ly/1m1l4p1), emphasizing the growing need to assess and adjust the performance of agricultural systems across a number of sustainability indicators (e.g., yields, resource-use efficiencies, ecosystem services, and social and economic well-being). Many graduate students and early career members are also developing interdisciplinary research skills aimed at balancing food production and environmental quality goals, yet there are limited opportunities to engage with SI issues and focus on systems-level outcomes. On a broader scale, there is rapidly growing demand from policymakers and non-agricultural specialists for SI information, with common questions including: What are the goals of SI? What are successful examples? What SI targets should be set in different contexts? What are the challenges?

The SI Community of ASA was formed early this year to address these issues and serve as a focal point for SI efforts in our Society. Despite little agreement on what SI entails, it has received much attention as a potential paradigm for transforming food production systems. Importantly, many core concepts require further exploration for an improved understanding of SI management approaches and potential tradeoffs. Actionable frameworks for evaluation are also needed. This community brings together members from various disciplines to examine opportunities for balancing agronomic, environmental, and socio-economic outcomes in production systems across the globe.

If you are interested in these topics and want to help shape the future of SI in our Society, please consider joining the Sustainable Intensification Community and/or attending the activities at the Annual Meeting!

C. Pittelkow, University of Illinois (community presiding leader) and T. Krupnik, CIMMYT (community vice-leader)

Sustainable Intensification Symposium

At the International Annual Meeting next month, a kick-off symposium on “Sustainable Intensification: Global Frameworks and Implications for the U.S.” (http://bit.ly/2cEgL0z) will be held on Monday morning, 7 November from 9:15 am–noon. Although research on SI has become popular in Africa, Asia, South America, and Europe, it is less explored in the U.S. The following invited experts will present global examples of SI and discuss the implications for agricultural systems in the U.S.: David Cleary (Director of Agriculture, The Nature Conservancy), Dr. Achim Dobermann (Director and Chief Executive, Rothamsted Research, U.K.), Dr. Bruno Gerard [Director of Sustainable Intensiication, International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), Mexico], Dr. Sieg Snapp (Professor of Soils and Cropping Systems Ecology, Michigan State University), and Dr. Pablo Tittonell (Director of Natural Resources and Environment, INTA, Argentina, Former Chair Professor, Farming Systems Ecology, Wageningen University, the Netherlands). The symposium will conclude with a panel discussion and questions from the audience to both stimulate interaction and debate around these issues and to define SI research and policy agendas to be addressed in future activities.

Following the symposium, an oral paper session will be held on “Sustainable Intensification Research: Assessing Multiple Biophysical and Socioeconomic Outcomes.” This paper session and the Sustainable Intensification Community business meeting will take place on Monday afternoon, 7 November from 1:30–4:15 pm.