Collaboration Opportunities to Advance Sustainable Agriculture

An emerging demand from consumers and corporations to understand and improve on the environmental impacts of agricultural production is opening new opportunities for collaboration with the scientific community. Achieving long-term sustainability is vital to continued agricultural production under a future with a more uncertain climate and greater demands on agriculture. To educate, incentivize, and measure progress along key indicators will require robust data, models, and conservation practice recommendations as well as cooperation among farmers, the supply chain, and researchers.

A recent article in Agricultural and Environmental Letters analyzes national-level sustainability indicators and highlights the opportunities for improvement across a range of environmental outcomes. The analysis illustrates improvements in the efficiency of land, water, and energy use, as well as reductions in soil erosion and greenhouse gas emissions, for commodity crop production in the U.S. since 1980.

Field to Market, an initiative to connect farmers and organizations across the supply chain, works towards improvement of these indicators by developing and applying field-level sustainability metrics to measure performance and incentivize improvements. The metrics and indicators are based in science, but knowledge gaps may limit the effectiveness of this unique initiative. The article outlines specific areas of concern and opportunities for researchers to engage with the supply chain initiative to help address these emerging challenges.


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