



Stewardship Index for Specialty Crops  
101 Morris Street, Suit 212  
Sebastopol, CA 95472

November, 2011

Dear Stewardship Index partner:

The Stewardship Index for Specialty Crops seeks your participation in our 2011-2012 “pilot” effort and asks that you consider working with us to develop and refine the methods for measuring and communicating performance on key environmental indicators. By participating in the SISC pilot, growers can make an important contribution in shaping stewardship metrics for their industry, driving forward both consistency in approach and methodology as well as ensuring that the metrics themselves are practical and meaningful for producers.

While hundreds of SISC stakeholders have participated in developing these metrics, there is no substitute for first-hand, on-the-ground experience. Learning from on-farm pilots in 2010 proved invaluable, and resulted in significant changes to the draft metrics. By forging consensus among leading buyers, growers and public interest organizations, SISC is poised to define industry approach and reduce the potential for a proliferation of similar-but-different sustainability reporting systems.

In addition, we expect that many SISC pilot participants will learn from the process of participating in the pilot. To the extent that there are enough participants in any given crop and region to provide anonymity and useful information, SISC expects to share the anonymized results with pilot participants to enable peer-to-peer comparison which in turn can lead to improved and efficiencies in individual operations.

Additional information about the 2011-2012 pilot process and expectations along with key contact information is attached to this letter. We encourage you to consider engaging with the SISC and our ongoing work to develop a meaningful approach to “sustainability” in the specialty crop sector by participating in the 2011-2012 pilot process. It is only through the direct experience and feedback from growers that a meaningful program can be developed for the benefit of the industry at large.

Sincerely,

The Stewardship Index Steering Committee

Hank Giclas  
Western Growers

John Keeling  
National Potato Council

Hal Hamilton  
Sustainable Food Lab

Kathy Means  
Produce Marketing Association

Jonathan Kaplan  
Natural Resources Defense Council

Tim York  
Markon Cooperative



## Overview:

### Stewardship Index for Specialty Crops On-Farm Pilot in 2011-2012

#### Seeking participants for the 2011-2012 pilot cycle!

The Stewardship Index for Specialty Crops is will soon start on-farm piloting of SISC metrics, following its successful pilot effort in 2010. In 2011, we will test a new SISC Metric Calculator (Beta Version 1.0) to better understand how practical it is for improving business operations and evaluating sustainability performance. We invite all specialty crop producers to pilot SISC metrics. However, participation by U.S. growers of citrus, potatoes, strawberries, processing tomatoes, wine grapes, and leafy greens is of particular interest, with the hope of benchmarking and comparing data within these peer groups. SISC will distribute pilot materials in early November and requests that all 2011 data be collected and returned by January 16, 2012.

#### What is the 2011-2012 SISC pilot?

The many organizations comprising SISC greatly appreciate the time and effort volunteered by industry leaders to pilot SISC metrics. SISC will rely on partner organizations (e.g. trade association, cooperative or supply chain) to coordinate with grower members who may wish to participate. SISC will provide the materials needed to recruit pilot participants, inform them of the pilot scope and goals, engage them in the collection of performance data, and support them in answering any questions that arise. Pilot materials provided by SISC include:

- User Guide
- SISC Metric Calculator (Beta Version 1.0)
- Confidentiality Agreement

SISC staff will explain how to use the Calculator and will provide ample opportunity for users to provide feedback, both written and verbal.

The 2011 Beta Metrics include:

- Water use efficiency (applied water per acre and per unit of production)
- Simple irrigation efficiency (applied water per unit of crop evapotranspiration)
- Soil organic matter potential (measured soil organic carbon / soil organic carbon potential)
- Nitrogen and phosphorus use (applied nutrients acre and per unit of production)
- Energy use (direct and embedded energy use per acre and per unit of production)

#### What data is needed to complete the pilot?

Growers may complete the pilot retroactively, using their records from the 2011 growing season, or they may choose to review the metrics as part of planning for the 2012 growing cycle. Growers may elect to include one crop or multiple crops in the pilot. To calculate these metrics, the following information is needed for each crop included in the pilot:

- General contact and farm information
- Area planted and crop rotations

- Harvest dates and yields
- Types and amounts of fertilizers applied
- Types and amounts of pesticides applied (for use in energy metric only)
- Soil organic matter (from lab test)
- Irrigation water applied and calculation of crop evapotranspiration (ETc)
- Fuel and electricity use
- If fuel and electricity were used to grow multiple crops, the tool provides a calculator for allocating energy used by each crop. Additional data requirements are:
  - Tractor type, horsepower, fuel efficiency, fuel type, and fuel consumption
  - Irrigation equipment power source, well lift, pressure, and dynamic head

While SISC generally expects participants to complete each metric, participation will not be refused if some part of the pilot cannot be completed.

#### Will data be confidential?

As outlined in our Confidentiality Policy, SISC is fully committed to preserving the confidentiality of individual data contributed by pilot participants and will not disclose data that can be attributed to an individual person, company, farm or facility to any party, including other pilot participants or SISC partner organizations. However, SISC may share data, feedback and other pilot results that are truly anonymized, i.e. when the data cannot directly or indirectly be attributed to a particular person, farm or company. Pilot data will be collected and anonymized by Ag Innovations Network, SISC's fiscal sponsor.

#### Contact

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