

FCWG 2020-21 Learning Exchange Series: Stacy Cushenbery and Debbie Reed (Ecosystem Services Market Consortium) Q+A

Farms & Owners

Is there potential to extend the soil credit program to small landowners of forested lands or is that outside the scope of this project?

Answer: That is outside the scope of our work.

Do you work with small hydroponic and aquaponic farms?

Answer: No.

How do you ensure equity between small and large-scale producers and seeing that benefits don't accrue to landowners (vs. renters), those with the most acreage or agribusinesses?

Answer: We are working with all major agricultural groups in the US to ensure that our approach works for farmers and ranchers of all sizes and backgrounds. We cannot necessarily negotiate agreements between landowners and renters. We encourage individual grower participation of any size, and our programmatic approach allows aggregation to occur without producers or project developers having to aggregate individual operations into large projects. We are size- and operation neutral.

Do you have any insights as to how small agricultural landowners (as small as 1-10 hectares) might be able to participate in carbon markets?

Answer: See above answer. Additionally, ESMC stacks credits, including soil carbon, net GHG reductions, water quality and water quantity so that the sale of these stacked or disaggregated credits improves the value proposition for farmers and ranchers of any size.

Science / Data / Methods

How does ESMC deal with genetically-modified crops? Do you monitor and measure the extent of use of GM crops? Does it impact credit calculations?

Answer: ESMC's program is a science-based, standards-based, outcomes-based program. We do not track or treat genetically-modified crops differently than other crops. Organic, GMO, and conventional crops qualify equally in our program. As an outcomes-based program we track improvements in soil carbon, net GHG, water quality and water use conservation associated with crop and livestock production, and generate outcomes-based credits based on quantification, monitoring and verification according to approved market protocols.

What are your requirements for independent third party verification?

Answer: ESMC follows market standards for verification. In our carbon offset program use independent third-party verifiers certified to ISO standards.

What is the scale of that region to determine additionality? E.g., a county, multiple states?

Answer: It is variable depending on the region and the area, but mostly at the county scale.

Can Precision Ag Data files be brought in through API Integrations?

Answer: Yes, that is a major means of data entry in ESMC's program.

Carbon / Credits

How do producers share in the carbon value? Do they receive fixed payments or a share of carbon revenue?

Answer: During our program buildout and pilot project testing we are establishing fixed price payments. Post market launch we are working on multiple approaches, including price discovery via auctions; contracts, including potentially long-term contracts; and potentially mixed approaches.