The Nature Conservancy teams with Nestlé Purina and Cargill to improve water sustainability in the beef supply chain

Using cutting-edge smart weather sensors, farmers can conserve up to 2.4 billion gallons of irrigation water over three years

GOTHENBURG, Neb., May 23, 2018 /PRNewswire/ -- The Nature Conservancy, in collaboration with Nestlé Purina and Cargill, is launching a three-year water project to improve the sustainability of the beef supply chain. This project is expected to reduce the environmental impact of row crop irrigation in Nebraska and provide a scalable irrigation solution for farmers across the U.S.



The smart weather and crop sensor, the Arable Mark, is the flagship hardware product of Arable Labs, Inc. It is the only device to combine weather and plant measurements, sent to the cloud for retrieval anytime, anywhere.

More than 50 percent of water used in U.S. beef production is dedicated to irrigating the row crops that become feed for cattle. By putting first-of-its-kind, cost-effective irrigation technology in the hands of farmers, the amount of water needed for row crop irrigation is greatly reduced, as is the environmental impact of the beef supply chain. The Nebraska project enables farmers to make more informed irrigation decisions, by installing smart weather sensors in crop fields and using Internet of Things (IoT) technology on sprinklers connected to a smart phone app.

"By using smart weather sensor technology in row crop irrigation, this program could help save 2.4 billion gallons of irrigation water over three years, which is equivalent to roughly 7,200 households over that time period," said Hannah Birge, water and agriculture program manager at The Nature Conservancy. "The reduction of pumping also means less energy used and less labor expense for farmers."

A Nebraska project, a scalable future

Nebraska was selected for the project, as it has the largest share of irrigated acres in the U.S., and the second largest cattle population. The Ogallala Aquifer, which spans the majority of the state, provides water to nearly one-fifth of wheat, corn, cotton and cattle produced in the U.S. and is the main water supply for people throughout the High Plains region. Grower and conservation efforts maintain the wetlands and sandbar islands of the Platte River, which provides habitat and clean water for people and wildlife.

"Nestlé Purina believes in adding value to agricultural lands that represent our supply chain," said Diane Herndon, senior sustainability manager, Nestlé Purina. "Ranchers and farmers are doing important work to make sure that they are protecting our natural resources for future generations. We all need to continue to adapt to a changing marketplace and a changing climate, and this project helps to improve water use efficiency in irrigated row crops used as cattle feed."

The project uses Field to Market's FieldPrint® Platform to track progress and was initiated through the efforts of the Midwest Row Crop Collaborative, a group of leading companies and conservation organizations focused on advancing and accelerating farmer-led programs in water conservation, water quality, and soil health in key agricultural states. By engaging the Midwest Row Crop Collaborative, best practices from the Nebraska project can extend to farmers in other regions.

"Farmers are continually innovating to bring food to the table more sustainably," said Courtney Hall, Cargill technical sustainability manager. "By working with them, and alongside The Nature Conservancy and Nestlé Purina, we're scaling these solutions around water conservation to ensure an even more sustainable future for beef."

"This project builds upon the success of a 2014 pilot in Western Nebraska, where we studied irrigation patterns and examined the impact on watersheds," said Roric Paulman, Farmer Advisor of the Western Nebraska Irrigation Project. "Through collaborations like these, we will leave a legacy of water quantity and quality for generations."

For more information, view our electronic press kit.

About The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy is a global conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. We are tackling climate change, conserving lands, waters and oceans at an unprecedented scale, providing food and water sustainably and helping make cities more sustainable. Working in 72 countries, we use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners.

About Nestlé Purina

Nestlé Purina PetCare promotes responsible pet care, community involvement and the positive bond between people and their pets. A premiere global manufacturer of pet products, Nestle Purina PetCare is part of Swiss-based Nestle S.A., a global leader in nutrition, health and wellness.

About Cargill

Cargill's 155,000 employees across 70 countries work relentlessly to achieve our purpose of nourishing the world in a safe, responsible and sustainable way. Every day, we connect farmers with markets, customers with ingredients, and people and animals with the food they need to thrive.

We combine 153 years of experience with new technologies and insights to serve as a trusted partner for food, agriculture, financial and industrial customers in more than 125 countries. Side-by-side, we are building a stronger, sustainable future for agriculture. For more information, visit Cargill.com and our News Center.

About Arable Labs, Inc.

Arable Labs, Inc. is a global solution to managing weather risk and crop health, delivering real-time, actionable insights from your field. Arable created the only monitor on the planet to synthesize both climate and plant measurements, the Arable Mark. Arable provides scientific-quality readings across all your locations that are configurable and integrate with your business for impact across the supply chain.

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