



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Dr. Shefali Mehta Tapped as New Leader of Soil Health Partnership**

*'Data is a powerful tool for bringing diverse groups together,' new executive director says*

(ST. LOUIS) – Shefali Mehta had a fascination with plants from early in her childhood. From her time growing up in New England, through her education and work in agriculture in the U.S. and around the world, she followed her passion, launching a notable career as an agricultural and environmental economist.

Mehta has been tapped as the new executive director of the [Soil Health Partnership](#), a long-term data project that measures and quantifies the impact of farm management practices known to promote healthy soils.

“Everything we have literally starts with the soil, which is intimately connected to our very survival and ability to take care of current and future generations,” Mehta said.

Soil health is taking on elevated importance in agriculture as a means to protect topsoil, helping farmers manage extreme weather, increase profitability, protect water quality and sequester carbon. Practices that improve soil health include growing cover crops, reducing tillage and taking a science-based approach to nutrient management.

The SHP is a farmer-led initiative of the National Corn Growers Association. More than 100 working farms are enrolled in 14 states.

“I was drawn to the data component of this effort, because I strongly believe using data fully and thoughtfully allows us to make better decisions,” Mehta said. “It often leads us to solutions and outcomes we may not expect. Data is a powerful tool for bringing diverse groups together – it helps us cast aside emotion and focus on our common objectives.”

Mehta’s first priority is to ensure that farmers get the full potential of the data collected so far. In the immediate months, the SHP will analyze these data and begin sharing those insights with farmers.

Mehta fills the position after Dr. Nick Goeser’s promotion to NCGA Vice President of Production and Sustainability earlier this year.

“I have every confidence in Shefali as SHP’s leader,” Goeser said. “She brings an amazing wealth of knowledge, skills and collaborative experience that will help broaden growth and success of the program.”



Mehta received her Ph.D. in Agricultural and Applied Economics, and a Master's degree in Statistics, from the University of Minnesota. She also holds an MPhil in Economics from Cambridge University, and a BA in Economics from New York University.

Mehta is currently the co-founder and CEO of an agricultural technology start-up, Ceres Wave, and also founded and leads Open Rivers Consulting Associates. She served as Vice Chairwoman of Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever, and serves on other boards, including those at the Minnesota Invasive Terrestrial Plants and Pests Center, the School of Statistics at the University of Minnesota, and Compatible Technology International.

In prior positions, she worked in roles across private, public and nonprofit sectors at organizations including McKinsey and Company, Syngenta, the Minnesota Office of Higher Education, St. Olaf College, the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and the American Cancer Society.

Mehta resides in the Washington, D.C. region. When she's not working, she enjoys scuba diving, kayaking, traveling and hockey. She says she looks forward to embarking upon her new role in the soil health movement.

"The fact that the Soil Health Partnership is farmer-driven is very powerful," she said. "The energy for change and innovation comes from the grassroots level."

*Editors: [Photo available for use](#)*

#### **About the Soil Health Partnership**

The Soil Health Partnership is a farmer-led initiative that fosters transformation in agriculture through improved soil health, benefiting both farmer profitability and the environment. With more than 100 working farms enrolled in 14 states, the SHP tests, measures and advances progressive farm management practices that will enhance sustainability and farm economics for generations to come. SHP brings together broad and diverse partners to work towards common goals. Administered by the National Corn Growers Association, the SHP's vision is driven by initial and continuing funding and guidance from NCGA, Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research, The General Mills Foundation, Midwest Row Crop Collaborative, Monsanto, National Wheat Foundation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Pisces and the Walton Family Foundation, with technical support from The Nature Conservancy and the Environmental Defense Fund. For more, visit [soilhealthpartnership.org](http://soilhealthpartnership.org).

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