



Market Demand for Conservation: STAR Pay-for-Performance Incentive

for Clay, Effingham, Jasper, Richland, and Shelby Counties

Siemer Milling Company is committed to connecting growers with opportunities to help preserve their land and legacy. Siemer is working with STAR (Saving Tomorrow's Agriculture Resources) to identify eligible fields and compensate growers who are implementing conservation practices that result in improved or outstanding (5-STAR Rating) environmental outcomes.

What is STAR?



Steve Stierwalt and Joe Rothermel, farmers in Champaign County, Ill, developed the STAR tool in 2017.

STAR was developed by farmers, for farmers

Farmers deserve recognition for their commitment to land stewardship and soil health. STAR allows farmers to evaluate their current production system, identify areas for improved management, document their progress and share their successes.

STAR is administered by local Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCD). SWCD staff score field forms, and provide farmers their STAR ratings confidentially. SWCD staff can also provide expert technical conservation assistance to farmers interested in adopting new practices that may raise their STAR ratings.

Eligibility and how it works:

Wheat, corn, and soybean growers in Clay, Effingham, Jasper, Richland and Shelby counties are eligible to participate.

To be eligible, a grower has to both submit a Grower Agreement with Siemer Milling Company AND enroll fields with STAR. STAR provides each field a confidential rating of 1 to 5 STARs. Growers receive a payment for:

1. Receiving and maintaining a 5-STAR Rating (the highest rating), OR
2. Demonstrating improvement in their initial STAR rating over a two-year period.

Example:

- Year 1: A field's STAR rating is a 1
- Year 2: A field's STAR rating is a 2

Because of the STAR rating improvement from one year to the next, the farmer will collect \$5/acre up to the acreage cap (500 acres/grower/year). Compensation is tied to acres, not bushels.

STAR rating scale and compensation levels:



The fine print:

1. The incentive is tied to the acre, not bushel. There is a 500 acres/grower/year cap.
2. Prioritization (if needed) will be first come, first served, using the date the signed Grower Agreement is received.
3. Fields that are already in private environmental incentive programs, such as carbon markets, are not eligible. Fields enrolled in publicly eligible programs, like USDA- or state-based conservation programs, however, are eligible.
4. A small subset of STAR fields is randomly selected each year for verification and quality control. Verification occurs in February and March following the crop year, and if a field that is participating in this program is randomly selected for STAR verification, the grower will be notified by a SWCD representative.
5. No backsliding: In subsequent years of STAR's Pay-for-Performance program, fields will not be eligible for a payment if they were previously rewarded for a certain STAR Rating Improvement. For example, in the image below, Field A received a payment for achieving an improvement from 2 to 3 STARS; this same field would NOT be eligible to receive a payment if the field went back down to a 2-STAR rating, and went back up to a 3-STAR rating. It would only be eligible for another incentive payment when it achieved a 4-STAR rating, or the flat payment for a 5-STAR rating.



What does STAR do with farmers' data?

Personal information, email addresses, management plans, operational details, and results are for growers' use only. STAR will not share this information with any third party unless growers specifically agree to a data-sharing option. Aggregate information may be used and shared by STAR and authorized third parties to improve conservation management services and tools, and to promote the understanding and adoption of sustainable agriculture practices.

Refer to STAR's full Terms of Use and Privacy Policy on their website: www.starfreetool.com

If a field is accepted in STAR's Pay-for-Performance program, STAR will share aggregated, NOT field-level, data with Siemer Milling Company.

When:

Deadline for signing up for the program and completing a STAR field form is September 15, 2023. Growers will be notified if they are approved for payment by mid-October, and payment will be processed (from Siemer Milling Company) in early 2024 after all verification has taken place.

How to sign up:

1. Enroll fields with STAR by visiting starfreetool.com AND
2. Submit a Grower Agreement to Siemer Milling Company. Contact your representative or:

Dave DeVore
T: 217-857-2248
ddevore@siemermilling.com

Jane Summers
T: 217-857-3131
JSummers@siemermilling.com

Timeline:

