



Saving Tomorrow's Agriculture Resources

Overview of STAR Verification Procedures

To establish STAR as a credible evaluation tool, STAR is committed to verifying the practices reported on a subset of randomly chosen Field Forms each crop year. As stated on the Field Form, STAR participants acknowledge that their fields may be randomly selected for Verification. Verification is handled by STAR's Verification subcommittee and volunteer SWCD licensees. The information gathered will be private and confidential with only aggregated data shared outside of the volunteers and committee members. Verification involves collecting evidence from STAR participants to document the reported practices on a particular Field Form.

Timing

Verification takes place immediately following the end of every STAR crop year (i.e., Crop Year 2022's Verification occurs in February & March 2023). A grower selected for Verification can expect the process to take roughly one hour, including being notified, collecting documentation, and speaking with the Verifier.

Field Selection

All Field Forms are grouped into distinct geographic regions in Illinois (Figure 1), along with any other participating states' field forms (IN & SD) added to the appropriate region. The square root of the total number of STAR fields from each region determines the number of fields to be randomly selected for Verification.

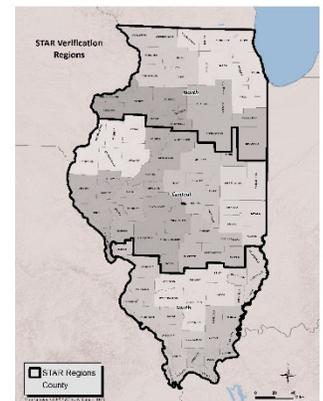


Figure 1

Verification Process (for a participant whose field is selected)

1. In early February, a STAR participant will be notified (by their region's STAR Verifier) that their field has been selected for Verification. Verifiers are often SWCD employees that have experience administering STAR in their own counties.
2. The Verifier will work with the STAR participant to complete a STAR Verification Report for each selected Field.
3. To complete the Report, Verifiers contact each assigned STAR participant and gather evidence for the practices reported on the Field Form. A variety of evidence can be used to document a practice depending on the type of operation and records available. See the table below for a list of acceptable evidence for each section of the Field Form. The type of evidence provided is at the discretion of the STAR participant.
4. Verifiers complete the Report and collect the evidence for the Verification Committee to review.
5. STAR's Verification subcommittee will review the Reports and validate the process with its own internal review. Any disputed Verifications will be reevaluated. Any participant who is unable to provide adequate evidence for Verification will be included in Verification in the next crop year.
6. Participants wishing to appeal the Verification process or findings may submit their appeal to the STAR Steering Committee for referral.
7. The Verification Report and collected evidence documenting reported practices serves as the record of Verification. The records will be kept until June 30th of the year following the Verification.

STAR Verification Report Evidence Item: Only one (1) item needs to be selected for each section. <i>"Other" evidence can also be submitted for each section if needed.</i>
Section #9 Evidence- Conservation and Management Practices
Cost-share program documentation
Enrollment verification in PCM, EQIP, CSP, etc.
Conservation Plan on file in the Service Center
Plans and results from trial(s)
Dated photo, aerial image, google map coordinates, GIS, etc.
Section #10 Evidence - Crop Rotation
FSA 578 or Crop Insurance APH summary
Planter or harvest log
Section #11 Evidence- Cover Crops (Summer 2021 - Spring 2022)
Local person to confirm (SWCD or NRCS staff, retailer, neighbor)
FSA 578 crop acreage report or NRCS Cost Share
Receipts and seed tags
Dated pictures of growing cover crops
Dated drone imagery confirmation
Section #12 Evidence - Soil Sampling
Dated copies of soil test results and maps
Section #13 Evidence - Fall Tillage (starting after harvest of 2021 crop)
Local person to confirm (SWCD or NRCS staff, retailer, neighbor)
Residue check
HEL compliance check
Dated drone imagery confirmation
Section #14 Evidence - Spring Tillage (2022 field operations)
Local person to confirm (SWCD or NRCS staff, retailer, neighbor)
Residue check
HEL compliance check
Dated drone imagery confirmation
Section #15 Evidence - Nutrient Management (Fall 2021 - February 2022)
Dated spread maps as applied or application logs
Invoice of products and amounts billed
Manure application rate and sample test results
Copy of MRTN plan
Section #16 Evidence - Nutrient Management (March 1 - Summer 2022)
Dated spread maps as applied or application logs
Invoice of products and amounts billed
Manure application rate and sample test results
Copy of MRTN plan
Section #17 Evidence - Additional Nutrient Activities
Dated spread maps as applied
Copy of MRTN plan