# 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. 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 for Siemer Milling Company's pay-for-performance program will occur in late 2024. A grower selected for Verification can expect the process to take a total of 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 & KY) 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 November, 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 who 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 form on the next page 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 serve as the record of Verification. The records will be kept until June 30th of the year following the Verification.
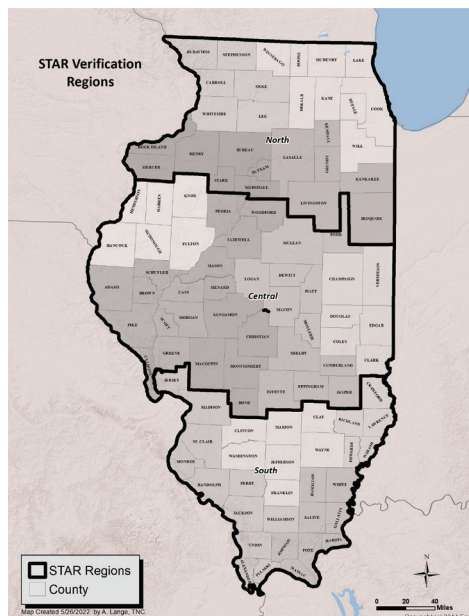
# STAR Verification Report Evidence Form

Only one (1) item needs to be selected for each section. "Other" evidence can also be submitted for each section if needed.

| **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 2023–Spring 2024)** |
| ☐ 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 2023 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 (2024 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 2023–February 2024)** |
| ☐ 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 2024)** |
| ☐ 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 |