



# THE ILLINOIS STAR REPORT

## SAVING TOMORROW'S AGRICULTURE RESOURCES

By Natalie Kerr, Illinois STAR Coordinator

### SIEMER MILLING COMPANY AND STAR PARTNER AGAIN TO REWARD CONSERVATION-MINDED FARMERS

STAR and Siemer Milling Company are once again partnering to recognize and reward Siemer customers in Illinois, Indiana, and Kentucky who implement conservation practices that improve soil health and water quality. Through the 2025 Siemer-STAR Producer Rewards Payment Program, participating farmers can receive financial incentives based on their STAR Rating, providing flexibility to adopt conservation practices that best fit their operations.

The STAR Tool (Saving Tomorrow's Agriculture Resources) evaluates in-field management practices and assigns a 1-5 STAR Rating based on the impact to local natural resource concerns. The higher the STAR Rating, the greater the potential for positive environmental benefits—and now, the greater the financial reward through this program. Unlike programs that mandate specific practices, the STAR Rating allows farmers to choose the conservation approaches that work best for their fields while still being eligible for recognition and payment.

The Siemer-STAR program first launched in 2023 with just one producer signing up. In 2024, participation grew significantly, with 13 growers submitting fields and 10 meeting the eligibility criteria. A total of \$65,000 was distributed to reward these farmers for their conservation efforts. This increase demonstrates growing interest in conservation among wheat producers and the value of a flexible, recognition-based approach to rewarding sustainability.

Looking ahead, Siemer Milling Company has committed \$75,000 per year for the next three years to continue supporting their customers who prioritize soil health and sustainability.

### HOW PAYMENTS WORK

Producers can qualify for payments in one of two ways:

- 1. Achieving a 5-STAR Rating** – Fields that receive a 5-STAR rating automatically qualify for a payment of \$25 per acre.
- 2. Showing Improvement Over Two Years** – If a field receives a lower rating (1-4 STARS), it can still qualify if the producer has two years of STAR Ratings and demonstrates improvement. For example, a field that scored a 3-STAR in 2024 and a 4-STAR in 2025 would be eligible because of the increase from 3 to 4 STARS. With guaranteed funding for the next 3 years, fields receiving their first STAR Rating in 2025 will have time to demonstrate improvement in 2026 and 2027.

### ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

- Available on a first-come, first-served basis for producers in Illinois, Indiana, and Kentucky
- Limited to 400 acres per producer (maximum payment of \$10,000)
- Must have been a Siemer Milling customer (delivered wheat) within the last five years or will deliver 2025 Harvest Wheat

### HOW TO PARTICIPATE

To participate, growers must:

- Sign a **Grower Agreement** with Siemer Milling Company
- Use the **STARTool** ([STARtool.ag](https://startool.ag)) to receive their STAR Rating(s)

The STAR Tool includes a verification component. By submitting a field for a STAR Score, farmers acknowledge that their fields may be randomly selected for verification.

### KEY PROGRAM DATES:

- **Enrollment Period:** June 1 – August 31
- **Verification Window:** October – November
- **Payment Distribution:** December (following successful verification)

Siemer merchandisers and local STAR Navigators will be available to assist farmers in using the STAR Tool and understanding their results.

For more information, visit [illinoistar.org](https://illinoistar.org) or contact [Natalie Kerr](#). To check out the STAR Tool, go to [STARtool.ag](https://startool.ag)