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## STAR Releases Annual Report Highlighting Impacts of Voluntary Conservation Efforts in Illinois

*STAR's second annual report provides insights to the initiative's continued growth*

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. – Today, [STAR \(Saving Tomorrow's Agriculture Resources\)](#), an initiative developed by farmers for farmers, is excited to release its [annual report for the 2020 crop year](#). The report documents STAR's continued growth and summarizes the benefits of in-field practices implemented by Illinois' farmers and landowners.

"The Illinois Department of Agriculture commends STAR on a year of growth," said Illinois Department of Agriculture Director Jerry Costello II. "STAR is a prime example of how a tool developed by Illinois farmers can encourage improvements in on-farm soil health and downstream water quality. We look forward to working with the STAR initiative to further cultivate conservation on Illinois farms."

The goal of STAR is not only to evaluate the use of conservation practices, but also to demonstrate the benefits of management changes, encourage improvement and recognize participants for their commitment to nutrient loss reduction and soil health. STAR uses a simple field form to capture information on practice and management activities, assign points to each activity, and provide a rating from one to five STARS.

For the 2020 Crop Year, 385 participants utilized the STAR tool on 155,605 acres over 2,276 Fields, more than doubling its use in Illinois compared to 2019. Statewide, over 70 Soil & Water Conservation Districts locally administer the program, providing one-on-one technical assistance to farmers and landowners interested in improving their STAR Rating.

### Report Highlights:

- The use of no-till and strip-till by IL STAR farmers accounted for 4,075 truckloads of sediment kept out of Illinois waterways, 17,028 pounds of phosphorus kept in the field, and provided climate benefits equal to removing the greenhouse gas emissions from 9,767 passenger cars from the road for one year.
- The use of cover crops by STAR farmers accounted for 2,548 truckloads of sediment kept out of Illinois waterways, 143,888 pounds of nitrate-nitrogen and 10,781 pounds of phosphorus kept in the field and provided climate benefits equal to removing the greenhouse gas emissions from 3,525 passenger cars from the road for one year.

To read the full report and learn more about the practices supported by STAR, visit <https://bit.ly/STARCHY2020>. Farmers interested in enrolling their fields are encouraged to fill out a 2021 Field Form. In addition to the standard fillable Field Form, STAR launched its Web App allowing participants to fill out a form on their phone, tablet, or computer with features that help simplify the process.



**How to get started: visit [www.starfreetool.com](http://www.starfreetool.com) to receive your STAR Ratings or call [\(217\) 352-3536](tel:2173523536) ext. 3! Crop Year 2021 Field Forms will be collected through January 2022.**

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STAR was created by the Champaign County Soil and Water Conservation District in 2017 to meet agricultural goals in the Illinois' Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy plan. STAR offers farm operators and landowners a simple, free, and confidential tool to evaluate their conservation and land management practices. The goal of STAR is to encourage the continued adoption of conservation practices and recognize farmers for their commitment to sustainability. The STAR evaluation system assigns points for management activities on an annual basis. Scores are converted to a STAR rating of 1 to 5 STARs, with 5 STARs indicating commitment to a suite of practices proven to improve soil health and water quality.