



**COLORADO**  
Department of Agriculture

# Colorado Department of Agriculture's STAR PLUS PROGRAM

## Saving Tomorrow's Agriculture Resources



*Photo of STAR field provided by STAR participant Donald Schneider*

The STAR Plus program works in partnership with Colorado's Conservation Districts and Eligible Entities to provide financial and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers across the state. Participants gain familiarity and expertise with new soil health practices and an increased understanding of the environmental and economic outcomes associated with them.

Star Plus utilizes the STAR Rating system which assigns points for management activities on an annual basis. Scores are converted to a 1 to 5 STAR Rating, with 5 STARS indicating the most ambitious commitment to a suite of practices proven to improve soil health, water quality and water availability.

- ✓ Technical expertise
- ✓ Financial assistance - Matching Grants
- ✓ Access to equipment grants
- ✓ Soil Health Tests
- ✓ Soil Moisture Monitoring

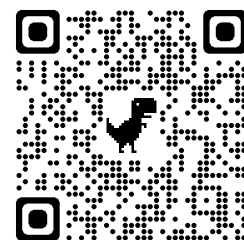
## CONTACT US



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Colorado STAR Website  
[Sites.google.com/state.co.us/soil](https://sites.google.com/state.co.us/soil)





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Colorado's Saving Tomorrow's Agricultural Resources (STAR) program uses the STAR Rating system that allows farmers and ranchers to evaluate their current production system, identify areas for improvement, document their progress, and share their successes. The evaluation system assigns points for management activities on an annual basis and scores are converted to a 1 to 5 STAR Rating, with 5 STARs indicating the most ambitious commitment to a suite of practices proven to improve soil health, water quality and water availability.

## STAR

Any Colorado farmer and rancher can fill out a STAR field form on CDA's website to receive a STAR Rating and a free soil health test.

## STAR PLUS

The STAR Plus program works in partnership with Colorado's Conservation Districts and Eligible Entities to provide financial and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers across the state. Participants gain familiarity and expertise with new practices and an increased understanding of the environmental and economic outcomes associated with them. STAR Plus also provides significant capacity support, equipment grants, training and other support to conservation districts and eligible entities so they can provide technical assistance to landowners where and when they need it. These partners provide the trusted local support and knowledge to ensure producer success.

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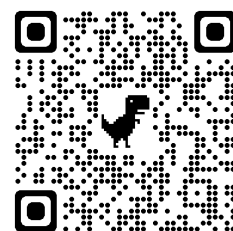


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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – STAR PLUS

### ***Q. What are the producer's eligibility requirements?***

All STAR Plus producers must be eligible to receive federal funds for FY2023 prior to being enrolled in the STAR + program. Producers can find the required forms on the USDA website at <https://www.farmers.gov/working-with-us/common-forms> or go into their local FSA Service Center. The following forms required are:

- AD-1026 HEL/Wetland determination
- CCC-902 Farm Operation Report
- CCC-941 Average Gross Income (AGI)



### ***Q. What is the length of the STAR Plus program?***

CDA and Shavano Conservation District work with farmers and ranchers as they implement new practices on one field over the course of three years. The program consists of 3 years for producers with producer practices and payments. In Year Four the Conservation District receives a capacity payment to finalize paperwork and perform exit consultations with producers

### ***Q. How many Producers can be enrolled in our District?***

Shavano Conservation District can recruit up to 5 producers to enroll in STAR Plus. CDA will provide recruitment, materials, help make connections, support Conservation Districts as they work to enroll producers

### ***Q. What is the criteria for small and historically underserved producers?***

USDA guidance defines these terms. "Small" as an operation with gross cash farm income under \$250,000. "Historically Underserved" means producers who are beginning; socially disadvantaged; veterans; and limited resources.

### ***Q. What are the yearly deliverables in the STAR Plus program?***

- Consultation Forms
- Year 2 & Year 3 Check in Form
- Grant data collection form
- Star Field Forms
- Soil Moisture Monitoring Form
- Match Forms, Receipts

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## Producers

Farmers and ranchers are the boots on the ground, getting things done from dawn to dusk and beyond, in scorching heat, intense wind, and blowing snow. You are our state's best natural resource stewards who understand the fragile relationship between soil, water, growth, and production. Whether raising crops or livestock, Colorado's producers need support.

Local conservation districts were formed in response to the catastrophic 1930s Dust Bowl that nearly wiped out Colorado's agricultural economy. In partnership with federal, state, and local governments, districts are uniquely positioned to help identify and assist with projects benefiting natural resources in their communities. The STAR (Saving Tomorrow's Agricultural Resources) program is another tool in their toolbox by providing incentives, education, and connections to technical resources to producers who want support with or are beginning to implement soil health practices.

The Colorado Department of Agriculture, through its Climate Smart Commodities grant, is expanding the opportunity for producers to enroll in the STAR program across Colorado and the western United States. Under this grant, farmers and ranchers, through conservation districts or an eligible entity, will be supported with technical assistance and funds to implement projects on the ground such as irrigation or field infrastructure, gain experience with new practices, or come to a better understanding of environmental and economic outcomes.

Funding through this grant will help Colorado producers by expanding the STAR program to as many conservation districts in Colorado as possible.

Get in touch with your local conservation district - Shavano Conservation District, phone 970-964-3584 - for support in enrolling your operations in the STAR program to utilize funding and educational opportunities, connect with technical assistance, and build soil health efforts in Colorado.

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