



# About the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol



In a period of ever greater supply chain scrutiny and a growing demand for transparency and traceability, **The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol** sets a new standard for more sustainably grown cotton. It brings quantifiable and verifiable goals and measurement to sustainable cotton production and drives continuous improvement in key sustainability metrics.

The Trust Protocol underpins and verifies U.S. cotton's sustainability progress through sophisticated data collection and independent third-party verification. Choosing Trust Protocol cotton will give brands and retailers the critical assurances they need that the cotton fiber element of their supply chain is more sustainably grown with lower environmental and social risk. Brands and retailers will gain access to U.S. cotton with sustainability credentials proven via Field to Market, measured via the Field Calculator and verified with Control Union Certifications.

The Trust Protocol is a complement to existing sustainability programs. It is designed from the ground up to fit the unique cotton mass-growing environment of the United States.

# Continuous Improvement

The 16,000 cotton farms in the United States have been committed to continuous improvement for decades. Over the past 35 years, U.S. cotton production has used 79% less water per bale and 54% less energy, reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 40%, all while reducing land use per bale by 49%. The adoption of practices such as minimal tillage, GPS and sensor-driven precision agriculture, and the growing of winter cover crops have further improved soil health, reducing loss and erosion by 37% per acre and increasing soil carbon levels.



# Industry-wide regulation and quality control

Source U.S. cotton with confidence, knowing that the United States has one of the most comprehensive and strict regulatory environments to ensure responsible growing practices as well as cotton trackability and quality-control, making it a safe and more sustainable choice:



The U.S. **regulatory framework is extensive** and covers environmental regulations on pesticides, labor, wages, working conditions, safety and health. U.S. cotton is also regulated as a food crop, making it safe for people and the environment.

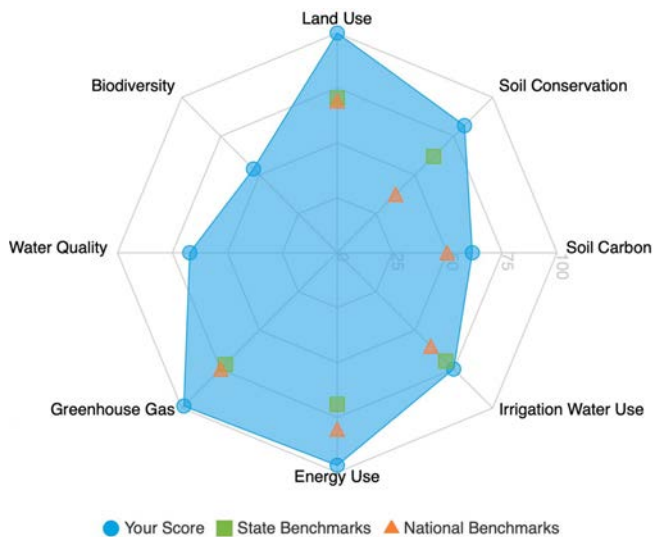


The **Permanent Bale Identification** system, which assigns a unique barcode to every bale of U.S. grown cotton at the gin, provides farm-to-mill trackability for each bale.



The **USDA Classification System**, used the world over, underpins the quality and consistency of every order of U.S. cotton that enters the supply chain – long staple length, minimal contaminants and bright, uniform color.

## Data-driven analysis and trusted verification



To meet the ever-increasing demands for apparel brands to demonstrate their environmental credentials, the environmental performance of Trust Protocol cotton is measured and analyzed at field-level. The Fieldprint Calculator, devised by Trust Protocol data partner, Field to Market: The Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture, illustrates in graphic form the progress of Trust Protocol growers which optimize yield, minimize water and chemical inputs, and leave healthy soil for future seasons and generations. This data is then made available, in aggregate form, to brands partnering with the Trust Protocol for use in their own sustainability reporting.

In addition, the Trust Protocol incorporates a comprehensive program of verification against Trust Protocol benchmarks, in the form of both second-party and independent third-party audits of grower performance through Control Union Certifications – the latter through allocated on-site visits.



**The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol is overseen by a multi-stakeholder Board of Directors comprised of representatives from brands and retailers, civil society and independent sustainability experts as well as the cotton-growing industry, including growers, ginners, merchants, wholesalers and cooperatives, mills and cottonseed handlers.**

**Our aim is to have more than half of all U.S. cotton production included in the Trust Protocol program by the 2025 growing season.**

A row of teal t-shirts hanging on wooden hangers, viewed from a low angle, creating a sense of depth and repetition. The shirts are neatly folded and the hangers are made of light-colored wood. The background is dark and out of focus.

## Improved sustainability and reduced risk

Brought together, this offers to brands and retailers a unique set of assurances that, in choosing Trust Protocol cotton, they can be sure that they are demanding responsibly produced, quality fiber, and reducing environmental and social risk in their field-to-mill supply chain. Put simply: The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol helps the apparel industry to measure its sustainability commitments to its customers, to its broader stakeholders, and to itself.

**The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol: Trust in a smarter cotton future.**