

# TAKEAWAYS



## U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol

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- The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol is an initiative to drive sustainability within U.S. cotton producers.
- This voluntary, farm-level program is designed to engage growers in continuous improvement. It also provides aggregate data that can be passed through the textile supply chain, which includes producers, merchandisers, manufacturers, brands, and retailers.
- The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol was created for several reasons:
  - To address the needs of brands and retailers, who are under increasing pressure from consumers to demonstrate product sustainability and from investors to document socially responsible investing
  - To address increased regulatory pressure from the European Union (EU), including “green” public procurement guidelines
- The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol enables the cotton industry to achieve industrywide goals in six key environmental metrics: (1) to reduce land use, (2) to reduce soil loss, (3) to improve water efficiency, (4) to reduce energy use, (5) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and (6) to increase soil carbon levels. Achievement benchmarks have been set for the year 2025.
- The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol has set three key requirements for producers:
  - *Complete a self-assessment questionnaire.* Each producer is asked approximately 100 questions organized in nine categories of farm management practices. Individual producers can review their responses against cumulative data from other producers.
  - *Use a data tool to track environmental metrics in representative fields (10% of acres).* Producers can use any of several tools, including the Field to Market FieldPrint Calculator. Individual producers also receive feedback about specific metrics for their operations relative to national and state averages.
  - *Participate in verification by an independent party.* There are two levels of verification: (1) Second-party assurance is conducted by a merchandiser affiliated with the producer, and (2) third-party independent verification is conducted via a random, on-farm visit (involves fewer than 10% of producers, done January–March). Verification provides the credibility needed by the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol within international circles.
- The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol is “telling the story” of U.S. cotton. Doing so will meet the needs of customers and ensure that U.S. cotton can compete in every market and every supply chain.