

When it comes to cotton production,

Sustainability is in the water

It all comes down to water use.

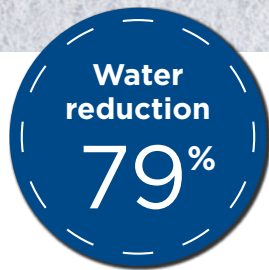
Whether it's in our own personal lives or the fashion brands we patron, lowering our water use is a significant part of how we reduce our environmental impact. And it matters in the raw materials these brands and retailers decide to source.

Contrary to popular belief, cotton is not a water-intensive crop. According to Transformers Foundation, global averages about cotton's environmental impact can be misleading, as they fail to capture huge local variations in resource usage and impacts. While global data can be useful to tell whether cotton's overall impact is going up or down decade over decade, content and local data are key¹. Currently 2/3 of cotton grown in the U.S. is not irrigated, utilizing natural rainfall to grow. Roughly 1/3 uses irrigation to supplement natural rainfall and only 2% is solely dependent on irrigation.

¹ Transformers Foundation, "Cotton: A Case Study in Misinformation", transformersfoundation.org



U.S. COTTON
TRUST PROTOCOL[®]
Trust in a smarter cotton future



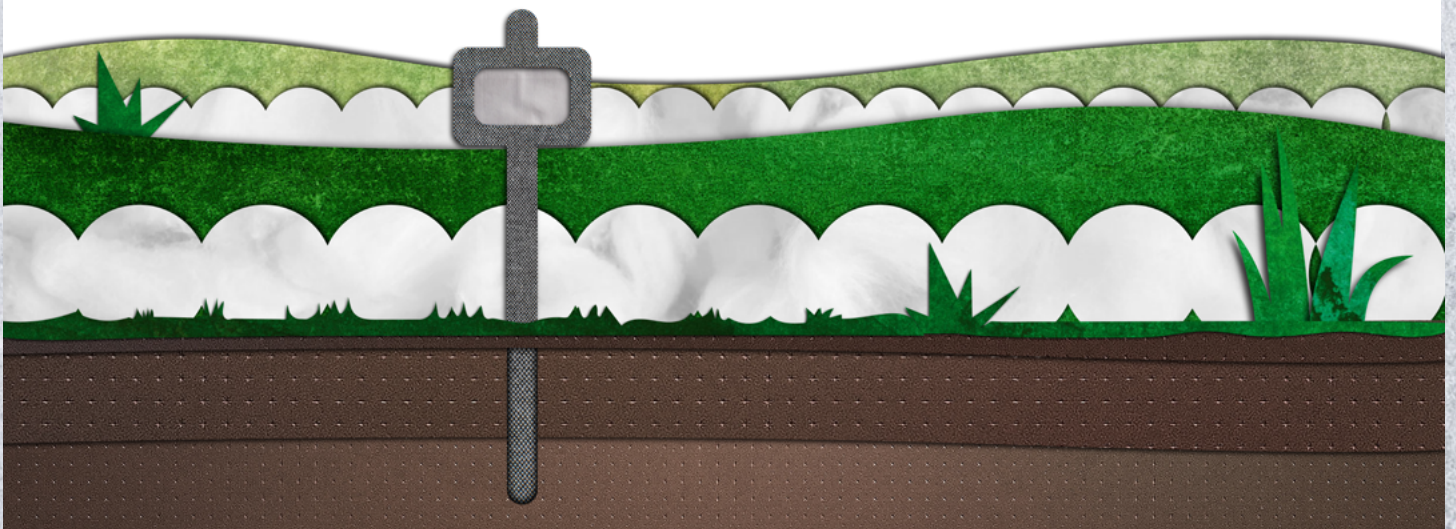
Water sensing technology helps growers map and track where water is needed throughout their fields. Irrigation scheduling technology and drip irrigation ensure water is soaked into the ground. Growers can also measure water evaporation from the soil and plants. All these practices ensure growers are taking advantage of every drop of water. Thanks to these innovations and technologies **U.S. cotton growers have reduced water use by 79% over the past 35 years.**

The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol aims to tell the true story about U.S. cotton and its water use. With a growing demand for transparency about brands' and retailers' water use and their raw materials, the Trust Protocol sets a new standard in more sustainably grown cotton. It brings quantifiable and verifiable goals and measurement to sustainable cotton production and drives continuous improvement in key sustainability metrics.

It is a system that underpins and verifies U.S. cotton's sustainability progress through sophisticated data collection and independent third-party verification, providing brands and retailers the critical assurances they need to show that the cotton fiber element of their supply chain is more sustainably grown with lower environmental and social risk.

In the face of climate change, brands and retailers have set comprehensive sustainability plans with significant objectives for their businesses. And U.S. cotton growers are continuously improving their sustainability practices by employing new technologies to their lower water use.

Growers have introduced systems like computer-driven moisture sensors to improve water efficiency by alerting them to periods of sufficient rainwater and showing them water-level measurements at a series of distances below ground level. These advancements enable growers to understand if their cotton is receiving enough water at all levels. By receiving a picture of the soil's moisture, farmers can irrigate their fields more efficiently – if irrigation is needed at all. Almost two-thirds of U.S. cotton growers now employ some type of precision technology.



“We track every drop of water that we apply to our fields year-to-year,” said Aaron Barcellos, a Trust Protocol grower member from California. “We’ve got soil probes in the field and use satellite imagery. We have an agronomist that helps with irrigation scheduling and crop coefficients. All of these changes allow us to eliminate waste and put every drop of water to use.”

In 2020/21 Trust Protocol grower members showed significant improvement in water use increasing efficiency by 14%, compared to the 2025 U.S. National Goal for Continuous Improvement of increasing efficiency by 18%.

As a member of the Trust Protocol mills, merchants, brands and retailers will gain access to U.S. cotton with sustainability credentials proven via Field to Market: The Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture, measured via the Fieldprint Calculator and verified with Control Union Certifications.

Mill and manufacturer members can also be identified as part of a fully transparent supply chain and selected by brands and retailers as they look to source more sustainably grown U.S. cotton fiber.

In its first year the Trust Protocol has welcomed more than 560 brand, retailer, mill and manufacturer members since its launch in 2020. This includes J.Crew, Madewell, Levi Strauss & Co. and, Gap Inc. as well as global apparel manufacturer Gildan. The Trust Protocol has also welcomed UK retailers Tesco and Next Plc.

It’s on all of us; growers, brands, retailers, mills, manufacturers and consumers to use water more responsibly. The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol provides the verified data to show that we’re using less of our natural resources when it comes to the clothes we wear.

Become a member today
at **TrustUSCotton.org**



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