



Terms and Definitions: The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol

Version 1.0 - February 2025

This document provides definitions which are used throughout U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol program documents. Key definitions may also be included in the applicable document.

NOTE: Definitions will be adapted and harmonized through the revision process for this document.

Section A- Definitions

Terms used in U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol program documents are defined below. Key documents where terms appear are referenced for each term, though references to the term apply across all U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol program documents, except where noted. Acronyms are specified in parentheses.

| Term | Document | Definition |
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| Aggregator | Claims Framework | Supply chain entities, typically cotton merchants, marketing cooperatives or gins, that assist the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol in the administration of the program, including the uploading of shipment data for the shipment of tracked U.S. Cotton and/or Protocol Cotton shipments to Trust Protocol member yarn and textile mills in the Protocol Consumption Management Solution (PCMS). |
| Article | Claims Framework | One specific material tracked within the PCMS such as a yarn article, a fabric article, or a garment article. |
| Assessment Team | Verification Program Manual | The individuals responsible for the third-party verification assessments of this program, within the authorized verification bodies. This team should be comprised of a verifier and a program manager (or similar title). |
| Assigned Environmental Metrics | Claims Framework | Refers to the annual program environmental metrics for each of the key indicators, aggregated and verified for the total Protocol Cotton production and assigned to participating brands based upon their consumption of PCCUs. |
| Authorization Body | Verification Program Manual | The owner of the program, who holds authorization over the selection of the Authorized Verification Body. The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol team is the Authorization Body. |
| Authorized Verification Body | Verification Program Manual | Third-party verification bodies that meet all the requirements for authorization, and that have been authorized to conduct third-party verification audits for the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol. |

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| Chain of Custody | Chain of Custody Requirements | A means by which inputs, outputs, and associated attributes are transferred, monitored and controlled as they move forward through each step in the supply chain (adapted from ISO 22095). |
| Claim | Claims Framework | Assertions about the sustainability attributes of a product, process, service, or organization. This includes communications about the assurance status of a client and/or the client's association with the sustainability program. (ISEAL) |
| Claim (for U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol) | Chain of Custody Requirements | Any types of communications presented to the buyer, supply chain member or consumer about the products containing Protocol Cotton and/or U.S. Cotton. It could be a statement between a yarn spinner to a fabric mill; or on-product claims sold by retailers to consumer. On-product claims are claims attached physically, visually or by inference to an individual finished product and communicated via consumer-facing channels. For additional details, see U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol Claims Framework |
| Consumption Forecasts | Claims Framework | Defined as non-binding forecasted volumes of Total Cotton consumption from all sources as well as anticipated PCCUs consumption for a given Protocol Year. Brand/Retailer Members will be required to submit their Consumption Forecasts by a pre-determined date for the upcoming Protocol Year (starting on August 1st) and the Allocated PCCU Volumes will be determined and communicated to the individual Brand-Retailer Members by no later than June 30th. |
| Controlled blending | Chain of Custody Requirements | When eligible products or materials are blended with other materials at any stage of the production process. The declared and documented percentage of eligible materials determines the proportion of eligible material(s) attributable to the tracked products. (Also known as percentage blending) |
| Corrective action | Verification Procedures | A corrective action is a process used to identify, eliminate, and prevent the recurrence of non-compliances found in the verification assessment. A corrective action is identified after a non-compliance has been detected. |
| Corrective Action Plan (CAP) | Verification Procedures | A plan submitted by the grower or the Farm Group Management System to the verification body after the assessment outlining actions to |

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| | | be carried out in order to come into compliance with any Mandatory Practice where a non-compliance was found. |
| Critical control point | Chain of Custody Requirements | A place or situation in the supply chain where there is a risk of uncontrolled mixing or substitution between verified and unverified materials. |
| Deviation | Verification Procedures | Occurs when a Recommended Practice from the Self-Assessment Questionnaire is not implemented on the farming operation. |
| Distributed Ledger | Claims Framework | Digital technology platform leveraging a deferred inventory ledger system capturing article-level transactional data. Robust validation algorithms are applied by the system to assure inputs, outputs, consumptions, waste, and inventory reconciliations. |
| Eligible material (product) | Chain of Custody Requirements | All products, including fiber, yarns, fabrics, garments, and derived products that physically contain a minimum of 10% U.S. Cotton and/or Protocol Cotton by volume weight are eligible for tracking in the PCMS. |
| Environmental Data Aggregation | Claims Framework | Process of compiling and analyzing the sum of all participating Protocol Grower's environmental data and reporting it externally at a Trust Protocol program level. |
| Farmer Group Coordinator | Verification Procedures | The entity responsible for ensuring that all growers in the Farm Verification Group have completed the required documentation and communicating with the growers about the objectives of the Trust Protocol. This will either be the role of an aggregator or the role of the Trust Protocol. |
| Farm Group Management System (FGMS) | Verification Procedures | The system used by the Trust Protocol to track the progress of the individual growers within each group, in relation to the use of the Protocol Platform, the required documentation, and any trainings. |
| Farm Verification Group | Verification Program Manual | The group of farms in which each producer is automatically placed by the Trust Protocol based on the location of the producer's operations. The groups are used as part of the sampling methodology and verification results reporting by the Trust Protocol. |
| Farmer | Verification Procedures | The terms farmer, grower or producer can be used interchangeably to be in line with language of the brand or based on preference. |

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| Farmer Commitment Statement | Verification Procedures | A statement outlining the commitments for continuous improvement made by participating growers and found on the Protocol Platform. |
| Farmer groups | Verification Procedures | Groups of farmers created based on either geographic proximity or commonality of an aggregator. See 'Farm Verification Group'. |
| Fieldprint Calculator (FPC) | Verification Program Manual | The Fieldprint Calculator is the online tool that is used by the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol to measure the environmental impact of cotton production and continuous improvement of metrics related to land use, energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, water use, soil conservation, and soil conditioning index (soil carbon). |
| Grower | Claims Framework | The terms farmer, grower or producer can be used interchangeably to be in line with language of the brand or based on preference. |
| Grower Self-Assessment Questionnaire | Verification Procedures | A primary verification program requirement and questionnaire for U.S. cotton growers that outlines best management practices identified by the Trust Protocol with particular emphasis on cotton cultivation in the United States |
| Input material | Chain of Custody Requirements | The materials consumed in the production of articles tracked and governed under the Chain of Custody Requirements of the Trust Protocol, including raw cotton being used to produce yarn, yarn being used to produce fabric, or fabric being used to produce garments. |
| Job order | Chain of Custody Requirements | A request to manufacture a certain type of product that includes quantities and specification (e.g. quality, types of fibers). |
| Mandatory Practice | Verification Program Manual | Farm practice that meets or exceeds federal, state, and local regulatory requirements and that has been identified by cotton experts to be vital in the sustainable production of cotton. |
| Material | Chain of Custody Requirements | The physical good that results from each stage of production. It may include a finished or unfinished good. See 'product'. |
| More sustainable | Claims Framework | A way to describe the measurement of year-on-year improvement against six key metrics used by the Trust Protocol and its participating growers. In relation to claims statements, the Trust Protocol allows the use of 'sustainable' and 'more sustainable' interchangeably in line with user preference. |

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| Non-compliance | Verification Procedures | Occurs when a Mandatory Practice from the Self-Assessment Questionnaire is not implemented on the farming operation. |
| Non-conforming product | Chain of Custody Requirements | Non-conforming product relates to any product that is identified as Protocol Cotton or Tracked U.S. Cotton but cannot be proven to come from either of these sources. |
| Non-eligible products | Chain of Custody Requirements | Any product either not containing Protocol Cotton or Tracked U.S. Cotton, or a product that is produced in a non-member facility (for any of the processing steps) |
| On-product claim | Claims Framework | Claims attached physically, visually or by inference to an individual finished product and communicated via consumer-facing channels. |
| Originating Aggregator | Verification Procedures | The term used for the participant in the supply chain who aggregates Protocol Cotton from many Protocol Cotton producers. This actor usually helps producers become familiar with the Trust Protocol's online platform and with document collection. They are also responsible for conducting a second-party verification assessment, as appropriate. |
| Output material | Chain of Custody Requirements | The products/articles resulting from the transformation or processing of eligible materials, including, but not limited to, raw cotton being used to produce yarn, yarn being used to produce fabric, or fabric being used to produce garments. |
| Permanent Bale Identification (PBI) | Verification Program Manual | Permanent Bale Identification (PBI) is a system developed by the U.S. cotton industry that assigns a unique identification number and standard barcode to each bale of cotton. |
| Percentage Blending | Chain of Custody Requirements | See 'Controlled blending'. |
| Physical Segregation | Chain of Custody Requirements | A traceability model that ensures verified product is kept separate from non-verified sources. When Trust Protocol eligible materials are segregated from ineligible materials at any stage of the production process, the processed/finished products are composed exclusively of eligible materials. |
| Producer | Verification Program Manual | See 'Grower'. |

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| Producer group | Verification Program Manual | See 'Farm Verification Group'. |
| Product | Chain of Custody Requirements | The physical good that results from each stage of production. These may include finished or unfinished goods. See 'material'. (Textile Exchange) |
| Program Manager | Verification Program Manual | The person who works at the approved third-party verification bodies and is responsible for reviewing the verifiers' work. This person can also issue the attestations if a separate certifier is not available/employed. |
| Protocol Bank | Claims Framework | Defined as the central repository for all minted PCCUs. The total volume of PCCUs in the Protocol Bank can never exceed the total volume of recorded Protocol Cotton fiber kilograms recorded in the PCMS. |
| Protocol Claims | Claims Framework | Refers to all marketing and/or communication content that is published externally or internally but which describes a Protocol Member's participation or activities related to their participation in the Protocol. |
| Protocol Consumption Management Solution (PCMS) | Claims Framework | Defined as the technology solutions that record and track the movement of eligible materials through Brand-Retailer Member supply chains into their finished products. |
| Protocol Consumption Unit (PCCU) | Claims Framework | The digital representation of each kilogram of Protocol Cotton, grown and harvested on qualified Protocol Grower's farm, to which a representative environmental metric value is assigned. Available by request to Brand-Retailer members in volumes equivalent to their consumption of U.S. Cotton and/or Protocol Cotton fiber in their finished products as recorded in the PCMS in any given Protocol Year. |
| Protocol Cotton | Claims Framework | Defined as fiber grown and harvested on a qualified Protocol Grower's farm and recorded in the PCMS as Protocol Cotton. |
| Protocol Platform | Verification Program Manual | The platform where data is collected from growers to complete the grower self-assessment and record information about gins, merchants, mills, and manufacturers. Data regarding cotton bales is also created in the platform. |

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| Protocol Year | Claims Framework | Defined as the operating fiscal year under which the Trust Protocol operates and runs from August 1st in any calendar year to July 31st in the following calendar year. |
| Qualified Data Management Partner | Verification Program Manual | An organization or service provider that collaborates with the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol to ensure the effective management, governance, and utilization of grower data. |
| Recommended Practices | Verification Procedures | Selected grower practices from the Self-Assessment Questionnaire that are designated practices for the grower to achieve improvements over time based on the local conditions where the grower is farming. |
| Regenerative practices | Claims Framework | Regenerative agriculture describes holistic farming practices that can reverse climate change by rebuilding soil organic matter and restoring soil biodiversity – resulting in both carbon drawdown and improving the water cycle. Regenerative agriculture aims for net positives and calls for growers to continually improve their practices and techniques. Practices such as conservation tillage, crop diversity and cover crops aid soil health and increase soil carbon levels. |
| Representative group | Claims Framework | Refers to the 2015 grower data set used to create the baseline reference for Trust Protocol program environmental metrics. Refer to the Trust Protocol Annual Results Report for full details. |
| Reverification assessment | Verification Procedures | The third-party assessment that re-assesses a grower's conformance with Trust Protocol program requirements if the grower is selected for an assessment per the sampling methodology. |
| Second-party Verification Assessment | Verification Procedures | An annual assessment covering the same scope as the third-party verification, but conducted by the originating aggregator, or by the Trust Protocol team, before the third-party verification assessments takes place. |
| Site | Chain of Custody Requirements | Any distinct company-owned manufacturing location which is geographically located at a different address than the company's parent headquarters address. A manufacturing location which is owned and operated by subcontractor(s) is not to be considered a site under the Parent company that purchases their |

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| | | services but is a site under its own Trust Protocol account. |
| Statement | Claims Framework | Generally considered to be factual representations that can be objectively verified. They are based on evidence and can be supported by reliable sources. A statement can be verified. |
| Temporal | Chain of Custody Requirements | One of the boundaries (alongside a physical boundary) through which the transfer of inputs, outputs and specified characteristics are controlled in a chain of custody system. Where a temporal boundary is allowed, the system specifies a volume reconciliation period and process, which defines the timeframe in which the input and output of materials with specified characteristics must be balanced, and how this must be recorded and evidenced. (ISEAL) |
| Third-party Verification Assessment | Verification Procedures | A verification conducted by a third-party, which verifies grower level requirements and Farm Group Management System (FGMS) requirements. The results inform a risk coefficient and the sample size for the Second-party Verification Assessment(s). |
| Third-party Verification Body | Verification Program Manual | A company who fulfills the requirements outlined in the Verification Program Manual, and who partners with the Trust Protocol to conduct the third-party verification assessments, as described in the Verification Procedures. |
| Traceability | Claims Framework | The ability to trace something as it moves through a process. The completeness of the information about every step in a process chain allows for verification of information related to the origin of the material. (ISEAL) |
| Tracked U.S. Cotton | Claims Framework | Any U.S. Cotton fiber that is recorded in the Protocol Consumption Management Solution (PCMS) which is distinct from Protocol Cotton. |
| Transparency | Claims Framework | Relevant information being made available to all elements of the value chain in a standardized way, which allows common understanding, accessibility, clarity and comparison. (EU Commission, 2017). |
| Trim | Chain of Custody Requirements | Supplemental items added to a product for decorative or functional reasons (e.g. embroidery, buttons, zippers). (Textile Exchange) |

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| Protocol Platform | Verification Procedures | The platform created by the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol that is used by growers and other supply chain entities participating in the program. |
| Variation | Verification Procedures | Occurs when a required practice in the Field-to-Market questionnaire is not implemented on the farming operation. |
| Verification Assessment | Verification Program Manual | An evaluation undertaken by an Authorized Verification Body to verify conformity with the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol's Principles and Criteria. It may be conducted remotely, or on-site, and may involve visual inspection, interviews and/or document and data reviews. |
| Verification body | Verification Program Manual | See 'Authorized Verification Body' |
| Verification Procedures | Verification Program Manual | A standalone document outlining the processes and procedures for conducting third-party verification audits. |
| Verified Protocol Farm | Chain of Custody Requirements | U.S. cotton farm that has completed all the steps required to provide environmental and practice data to the Trust Protocol system and that has committed to continuous improvement of social and environmental outcomes on cotton acreage. |
| Verifier | Verification Program Manual | A trained individual who works with the approved third-party verification bodies and is qualified to conduct third-party verification assessments for the Trust Protocol. |