

U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol 2024/25 Annual Report

Key Findings

The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol's 2024/25 Annual Report, marking five years of progress, highlights an expansion in membership, traceability, and measurable on-farm environmental improvements. The program now provides five years of field-level data, further demonstrating its commitment to building a resilient and sustainable cotton supply chain.

Continued Record Growth: For the sixth consecutive year, the Trust Protocol achieved record growth in grower participation and enrolled acres despite challenging conditions.

- **Planted acreage now represents** 2.58 million acres, an 18% increase from the previous year.
- **Grower membership** rose 14% to 1,512 growers, underscoring the U.S. cotton industry's commitment to responsible production and continuous improvement.

Five Years of Measurable Impact: Five years of aggregated field-level data show that Protocol growers have met or exceeded five out of six ambitious 2025 National Goals for Continuous Improvement compared to a 2015 baseline.

- **Land Use Efficiency:** 15% improvement; 2025 goal reached a year early
- **Water Use Efficiency:** 87% improvement despite drought conditions — producing the same amount of cotton with 47% less water from irrigation
- **Energy Use:** 28% reduction
- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** 25% reduction
- **Soil Loss:** 89% reduction; well below USDA thresholds
- **Soil Health:** Soil carbon loss reversed, with growers now actively building healthier soils that sequester carbon
- **Yield Impact:** Protocol growers produce 20% more cotton per acre than U.S. average

Widespread Adoption of Regenerative Agriculture Practices: The report highlights the increasing adoption of regenerative agriculture principles by Protocol growers, leading to tangible positive outcomes.

- **No-Till/Conservation Tillage:** 57% of acres are under no-till or conservation tillage, reducing erosion, improving water infiltration, and lowering fuel use
- **Cover Crops:** 63% of growers plant cover crops, resulting in a 300% higher Soil Conditioning Index and nearly half the erosion compared to bare-soil fields
- **Crop Rotation:** 77% of growers use crop rotation to enhance soil health and disrupt pest cycles
- **Nutrient Management:** 84% of growers follow 4R nutrient management principles, improving water quality and nutrient-use efficiency
- **Integrated Pest Management (IPM):** 87% of growers implement IPM strategies to reduce crop protection product use
- **Biodiversity:** Over 63% of growers achieve habitat scores above national benchmarks, integrating pollinator strips, corridors, wetlands, and native plantings

New Regenerative Cotton Pilot: In 2025, the Trust Protocol launched a pilot program to formally recognize and verify regenerative practices, providing brands and retailers with a new sourcing option for traceable regenerative U.S. Cotton.

Traceability at Scale: In the 2024/25 season alone, the Trust Protocol's traceability platform saw exponential growth in adoption and scale.

- **PCCU Uptake:** Year-over-year growth in PCCU uptake was 413%
- **Volume Tracked:** 20 brands successfully tracked approximately 126,000 tons of Trust Protocol fiber
- **Finished Products:** This translates to 690 million finished products across 75,000 purchase orders

Strengthened Partnerships and Collaboration: The Trust Protocol amplified its impact through key collaborations with organizations like Cascale, ISEAL, Textile Exchange, and Field to Market, to advance data transparency, develop a standardized cotton LCA methodology, and create a Climate-Focused Data Integrity Framework.

Why This Matters for the Fashion Industry

- **Tracking Progress in Sustainable Production:** Five years of verified, field-level data provides a robust foundation for brands to track progress towards Scope 3 emissions reduction targets, validate Science-Based Targets (SBTi), and make credible sustainability claims.
- **Supporting Regulatory Compliance:** The program's verified data helps brands meet reporting requirements under emerging regulations, such as the EU's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD).
- **Traceability and Transparency:** The scaled-up traceability platform, combined with new Chain of Custody requirements, offers enhanced visibility and confidence, allowing brands to track cotton from farm-to-finished-product and communicate their sourcing strategies with greater accuracy.