The Journey of a Bale

How Cotton Moves Through the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol Traceability Platform

Step 01
Growing Cotton

- Cotton is grown by participating U.S. growers.
- Depending on program participation, cotton may qualify as Tracked U.S. Cotton, Protocol Cotton or U.S. Regen™.

Step 02
Ginning

- Cotton is processed into bales.
- At this stage, each bale receives a unique Permanent Bale Identification (PBI) number.
- This identity becomes the foundation of traceability.

Step 03
Bale Authentication

- PBI numbers are validated and authenticated by USDA.
- This confirms the origin and integrity of the bale entering the system.

Step 04
Merchant and Cooperative Handling

- Cotton moves through merchants and cooperatives participating in the supply chain.
- Program status and bale information remain connected through system controls.

Step 05
Spinning

- Bales are converted into yarn.
- This is also where blending typically begins, as multiple bales may contribute to a single yarn lot.

Step 06
Fabric and Garment Manufacturing

- Yarn moves through fabric formation, dyeing, finishing and garment production.
- Supply chain transactions continue to be recorded and verified.

Step 07
Finished Product

- Brands gain visibility into the cotton used within tracked products and confidence that the cotton originated from authenticated U.S. cotton supplies within the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol system.

Why This Matters

The journey demonstrates how the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol combines:

- Verified U.S. origin
- Traceability to finished product
- Supply chain traceability
- Sustainability measurement
- Regenerative sourcing options within a single program framework.