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WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol

Setting new standards in sustainable cotton production



COTTON USA™ Customer Success Stories
THE COTTON THE WORLD TRUSTS



Vardhman Group



S A Aanandan Spinning Mills



Paramount Textile Mills

World Environment Day Special Edition

U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol setting new standards in sustainable cotton production

Every year June 5th is celebrated as the 'World Environment Day' (WED). Every year the day, which has now become a global platform for creating awareness about sustainability, is celebrated with a theme. In 2021 the theme is 'Ecosystem Restoration'. Coincidentally, this time around, just as in 2020, the event is being held amidst a raging Covid-19 pandemic. While extremely unfortunate, there is no denying the fact that the pandemic has been instrumental in raising the levels of awareness about sustainable practices and products.

After the pandemic a lot of the narrative on different media—such as the television, newspapers and over social media—has been about sustainability initiatives that can contribute to improving the overall health of our planet.

It is a well-known fact that rapid industrialization has been one of the key reasons behind the rising levels of pollution globally. However, simultaneously there has

been plenty of research going on finding out solutions to reduce the carbon footprint from industries. This is true of the textile industry, too. The textile industry has been at the forefront of sustainability initiatives. The U.S Cotton Protocol is perhaps the best example of such an initiative.

The U.S. Cotton Protocol sets a new standard for more sustainably grown cotton. It brings quantifiable and verifi-



COVER STORY

able goals and measurement to sustainable cotton production and drives continuous improvement in six key sustainability metrics— land use, soil carbon, water management, soil loss, greenhouse gas emission and energy efficiency. The protocol is designed to address the unique regulatory and larger farm growing environment of the United States.

The United States has one of the most comprehensive and strict regulatory environments to help ensure responsible cotton growing practices, as well as cotton traceability and quality control. The extensive U.S. regulatory framework covers environmental regulations on farm inputs, labor, wages, working conditions, safety and health. The Permanent Bale Identification (PBI) system, which assigns a unique barcode to every bale of U.S grown cotton at the gin, provides farm-to-mill traceability for each bale. The USDA Classification System vouches for the quality and consistency of every order of U.S. cotton that enters the supply chain.



The Trust Protocol has selected Control Union Certifications North America (CUC) to implement an independent, third –party verification program for the system.

The Trust Protocol is part of the Cotton 2040 coalition. Convened by sustainability nonprofit Forum for the Future, the coalition is a unique partnership that brings together representatives from standards, producers, brands and retailers and existing industry initiatives specifically to build





on and accelerate collective action to scale up and overcome barriers to sustainable cotton uptake across multiple standards.

The Trust Protocol has also recently become a member in the Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC), the leading alliance for sustainable production in the apparel, footwear and textile industries. The Trust Protocol joins over 250 global organizations from multiple sectors who have committed to furthering sustainability and transparency throughout the value chain.

Additionally, the U.S. Cotton Protocol has joined hands with the TextileGenesis™ to provide its members with complete supply chain transparency through its Protocol Credit Management System. It will use blockchain technology to record and verify the movement of U.S. cotton fiber along the entire supply chain, from farm to finished product.

By joining the Trust Protocol, members can prove, measure and verify that they are buying sustainably produced, quality fiber with lowered environmental and social risk.

The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol also finds a place in the Textile Exchange's list of preferred fibers and materials. The Trust Protocol is one of 36 fibers and materials that over 170 participating brands and retailers can select from as part of Textile Exchange's Material Change Index Program. Textile Exchange defines a preferred fiber or material as one which results in improved environmental and/or social sustainability outcomes and impacts in comparison to conventional production.

Several leading global brands have already joined the Trust Protocol. A good example is leading apparel maker Gap Inc., which has joined the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol and Textile Exchange's 2025 Sustainable Cotton Challenge as part of its sustainability strategy and commitment to use only 100% sustainably-sourced cotton by 2025. Some other top brands that have joined the protocol include leading denim manufacturer Advance Denim, luxury men's brand Byford and top UK retailer Next plc.



When it comes to sustainable cotton...

TRANSPARENCY MATTERS



Where you source materials matters more today than ever before.

Brands have set high standards. They demand quality, consistency, and materials that are ethical and sustainable. U.S.-grown cotton meets that high standard.



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



Through environmental stewardship, U.S. cotton production has used 79% less water and 54% less energy, reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 40%, all while reducing land use by 42% over the past 35 years.

The adoption of practices such as minimal tillage, GPS and sensor-driven precision agriculture, and the growing of winter cover crops have further improved soil health, reducing loss and erosion by 37% per acre and increasing soil carbon levels. With this record on sustainability, brands and retailers want to ensure what they buy is what they get.

A recent U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol survey revealed that 69% of brands and retailers believe that the pandemic has emphasized the importance of environmentally friendly products to customers – with 61% also noting that there has been an increased demand for sustainable products. Consumers want transparency about the cotton products they buy. Transparency gives shoppers complete assurance that the products they purchase are as sustainable as brands claim.

The research also found that 63% of brands and retailers stated that the pandemic has had a positive impact on their company's proactive investment in sustainability including 42% who said they're focused on sourcing raw materials more sustainably.

In this period of ever greater supply chain scrutiny and a growing demand for transparency, the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol is a system for more responsibly grown cotton that underpins and verifies sustainability progress through sophisticated data collection and independent third-party verification that provides members better transparency about the cotton entering their supply chain. The system is committed to six areas of sustainability in line with the U.N. Sustainability Development Goals including water use, greenhouse gas emissions, energy use, soil carbon and land-use efficiency.

“The Trust Protocol provides the **transparency** necessary to provide members the critical assurances they need about the cotton entering their supply chain.”

“For sustainability to be meaningful, we understand that the textile supply chain must demonstrate continuous improvement and data collection throughout the entire process.”

...said Dr. Gary Adams, President of the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol. “The Trust Protocol provides the transparency necessary to provide members the critical assurances they need about the cotton entering their supply chain.”

Trust Protocol members will have access to aggregate sustainability metrics based on self-assessment questionnaires of participating growers. In addition, members will receive customized reporting based on national environmental metrics for key sustainability indicators. Longer term, as enrollment in the Trust Protocol grows with multiple years of data, aggregate, year over year Fieldprint data derived from Trust Protocol grower members can be provided to member companies.

This data-based approach, backed up by independent, third-party verification from Control Union Certifications North America, gives brands and retailers the critical assurances that the cotton fiber element of their supply chain is more sustainably grown.

Trust Protocol can provide full transparency from the farm to the laydown, a group of bales that mills process simultaneously. The U.S. cotton industry requires a unique identification number assigned to every bale of cotton. That Permanent Bale Identification (PBI) number provides retailers and brands with the ability to trace U.S. cotton throughout the supply chain.

The Trust Protocol has welcomed over 300 brand, retailer, mill and manufacturer members since it opened enrollment six months ago. This includes Gap Inc. and its purpose-led lifestyle brands Old Navy, Gap, Banana Republic and Athleta as well as UK retailers Next Plc. and Byford. The Trust Protocol also has welcomed its first U.S. mills, its first members in Latin America, and Advance Denim, one of China's top three denim manufacturers.

“Our members want confidence knowing that the cotton they buy is more sustainable,” said Adams. “That’s why we created a unique system for our standard to help ensure the commitments behind our cotton.”

It is central to the Trust Protocol's purpose to give its members the ability to source confidently by providing critical assurances about the origins of their cotton. It's one of the only cotton initiatives that has agreed to measurable, third-party verified sustainability targets, which means more responsible production and consumption. It lets brands, business and consumers trust in the cotton they buy, sell and wear for today and tomorrow.

Become a member today at
TrustUSCotton.org



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



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**We see possibilities
and opportunities
in every challenge**

SUCHITA OSWAL JAIN

Vice Chairman and MD, Vardhman Group

Vardhman Group, with its portfolio spreading across yarn, fabric, acrylic fibre, garments, special and alloys steel, has not only been a leader in its business space but also an active cheerleader of environment sustainability initiatives. As the company's Vice Chairman and Managing Director Suchita Oswal Jain informs through this article, the desire to be sustainable has propelled it to think out of the box, ideate, innovate, and create something new and add value through all its processes

A leading Indian textile conglomerate, Vardhman Group is engaged in spinning yarn, weaving fabric, production of acrylic fibre, crafting of garments and manufacturing of special and alloy steels. For more than 50 years, the group has been delivering quality products to 75+ countries. Founded by late Ratan Chand Oswal and his son S P Oswal in 1965, Vardhman Group has been thriving under the leadership of Suchita Oswal Jain, a third-generation entrepreneur. The billion-dollar organisation is the largest vertically integrated textile manufacturer in the country, housing the largest installed spinning and weaving capacity of its kind. With 1.1 million spindles and 1,550 looms, the group annually manufactures 2,40,000 metric tons of yarn, 180 million metres of fabric, 22,000 tons of acrylic fibre and 1.8 million shirts.

The company is a leading manufacturer and exporter of cotton yarn and fabric, too, and operates through 18 state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities strategically located across India with a workforce of 27,500. It is also a company that places environment sustainability on its list of topmost priorities. "Global concern about the immediate and long-term impact of climate change is now increasing at a rapid pace. The subject is of significance for all since the change in environment impacts not just our lives but that of the future generations, biodiversity as also the entire planet," says Suchita Oswal Jain, Vice Chairman and Joint Managing Director, Vardhman Group.

"The issue therefore needs to be addressed with utmost priority and collectively with the active participation of all the stakeholders, including businesses, governments and organisations as also the people.

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We are catering to almost all major U.S. brands as supplier of cotton yarn, blended yarns and processed woven fabrics in India. Accordingly, keeping in view the unique features of U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol, Vardhman Group has decided to join the program and avail the benefits.

– Suchita Oswal Jain

Development shouldn't happen at the cost of our planet. We must create a world we can gladly bequeath to our future generations. Fortunately, we are making conscious choices and emphasizing on circularity, ethical fashion, responsible sourcing, greener processes, alternative energy and environment conservation. The textile industry is customer-oriented and governed by intense competition besides the demand for quick adaptability. In this dynamic industry, the scale and speed of change at times can overwhelm," she adds.

"However, these are the very factors that propel you to think out of the



box, ideate, innovate, create something new and add value. At Vardhman Group we see possibilities and opportunities in every challenge. We firmly believe that this dynamism, if channelized effectively, can lead to multi-faceted sustainable development. Sustainable development to us is much more than a principle of co-existence. We consider it to be development in the true sense. It is a broad umbrella encompassing everything related with the prosperity, fulfilment and development of the human race as also our planet. To imbibe sustainability at every level of the organisation, we follow a top-down approach," Suchita adds.

From the top management down to the workers, each one is involved directly in improving the positive impact of the industry and minimising the carbon footprint. The emphasis is on reducing, reusing and recycling. Suggestions and observations from factory workers who have first-hand experience are embraced with open arms. Employees are encouraged to put forward their viewpoint to the management. The company also has dedicated groups to ideate, analyse and identify avenues of improvement. To bring its sustainability journey a full circle, these groups backed by dedicated technical teams primarily focus on minimising emissions, water conservation, energy conservation, development of eco-friendly products and processes and improving upon the social aspects. "With the goal of 'greener textile manufacturing', we are working towards ascertaining that our actions from innovation to operations are deeply rooted in sustainability," Suchita states.

Being a Trust Protocol Member

The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol has quantified the use of land, water and energy, besides its emphasis on reduction of water consumption, emissions, and so on. As a sustainability measure, this approach is highly progressive and ethical. It is inclusive with the Vardhman Group's sustainability goals and aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). "Through these we aim to improve the multiple parameters of growth and define a clear path to do so," Suchita says. Vardhman Group is a regular consumer of both U.S. cotton – MOT as well as PIMA. "We are catering to almost all major U.S. brands as supplier of cotton yarn, blended yarns and processed woven fabrics in India. Accordingly, keeping in view the unique features of U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol, Vardhman Group has decided to join the program and avail the benefits," she adds.

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Our partnership with U.S. Cotton will establish credible supply chain links

M RAM
MD, Paramount Textile Mills



Paramount Textiles strongly believes in sustainable manufacturing and business processes and is a net consumer of its emissions

Madurai-based Paramount Textile Mills (P) Limited, which has been catering to many premium global brands, has always been known for its strong sustainability focus. The company is among the earliest ones in the region to partner with COTTON USA in the Madurai – Rajapalayalam textile belt. Stressing the importance of responsible manufacturing in his message for the World Environment Day, M Ram, Managing Director, Paramount Textile Mills, says, “The need for respecting and giving back to the environment has never been more pronounced and considered important than today. In the midst of the pandemic, our goal should revolve around sustainability and holistic production facilities that will evolve to consume all of our emissions in the most responsible and conscious way possible.”

“Zero waste policies coupled with strong environment-friendly production process complemented with carbon-free manufacturing evolution are the need of the hour. Every entrepreneur today should look forward to basing his business around the principle of ‘karmic’ green evolution that will make the world a much better place to live in for our generations to come. In the name of industrial development and technology we have robbed mother earth of its most precious elements: clean air and water. As time goes

by, we will continue to pay a price to have these elements which were once available free of cost. The price will be more expensive every passing day and soon we will pay a price that no money would be able to buy! I hope we will realise and act, act on the environment and act consciously to save earth through responsible manufacturing,” he adds.

Sustainability Initiatives

Highlighting some of the key sustainability initiatives taken by the company, Ram mentions that Paramount Textile Mills has always been at the core of compliance and beyond. “We believe in sustainable manufacturing and business processes. We are net consumers of our emissions. About 87% of our energy is green energy: energy from solar and wind mills. Gobar gas generation from our farms in the factory power our canteens. Home-grown organic vegetables in the backyard suffice our entire canteen operations for workers. Rainwater harvesting tanks, zero discharge systems, effluent treatment plants that are further processed into water for irrigation serve as primary sources to fuel vegetation in the factory. Sourcing of cotton from sustainable farms, ethical trade initiatives and as members of the fair labour organisation, we believe in the complete karmic cycle of what goes around comes back,” he elaborates.

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We are proud to be partners with likeminded people and COTTON USA through their remarkable journey of sustainable farm production can only contribute to the forward journey of partners like us, who eventually work to carry forward this journey in partnering their progress in farms to progressing production using similar techniques to achieve a holistic sustainable production process...

– M Ram



“The company’s active engagements in the area of sustainability in productive areas including patented processes that involve less emission using certain improvements in prototype manufacturing, evolution of zero waste processes, etc. have been on continual research. The company’s research and development to explore multiple sustainable fibres from international partners have been getting headwinds in the last months,” he adds. Sharing some of the key benefits that the company has gained being a member of the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol, Ram points out that U.S. cotton has been at the forefront of reduced greenhouse gas through their carbon soil atmospheric regeneration and reduced emissions of carbon footprints through its 10-year journey of sustainability goals (i.e. decreased water usage, increased yield per hectare, less energy etc.)

“We are proud to be partners with likeminded people and COTTON USA

through their remarkable journey of sustainable farm production can only contribute to the forward journey of partners like us, who eventually work to carry forward this journey in partnering their progress in farms to progressing production using similar techniques to achieve a holistic sustainable production process. Plant predictive growing techniques with advanced technology, dashboard intervention to provide highest levels of transparency are the need of the hour and for these reasons we believe our partnership with U.S. cotton will go a long way in establishing credible supply chain links to the most demanding and discerning clients of ours who expect value on products coupled with sustainable production standards that ensure complete transparency and high level of quality,” Ram states.



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U.S. Cotton will give brands and retailers the critical assurances they need

ILAVARASU
MD, S A Aanandan Spinning Mills



S A Aanandan Spinning Mills P Ltd. has since long been an active promoter of sustainability initiatives which are implemented in its day-to-day operations

Rajapalayam-based S A Aanandan Spinning Mills P Ltd. has, through its focus on quality and product range, always prided itself on its sustainability initiatives. The company boasts of a modern manufacturing unit equipped with a range of world-class textile machinery. Ilavarasu, Managing Director, S A Aanandan Spinning Mills has separate messages for brands and buying houses, consumers and farmers on the occasion of the World Environment Day:

- Message to brands and buying houses: To consider sourcing yarn, fabrics and apparel from licensed players. Sustainability and social audit compliance of the vendors and supply chain must be traced and tracked continuously.
- Message to consumers: To consider buying only plant and animal fibres and its blends-based apparel to reduce the carbon footprint. Preference to be given for U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol, organic, recycled, BCI, CmiA and Fairtrade labelled products.
- Message to farmers: Use less water, precision agriculture using accurate data, reduced use of pesticides, eliminating contamination while plucking, storing and transporting fibres.

Some of the key sustainability initiatives that S A Aanandan has taken include:

1. Using the following cotton varieties – U.S. Cotton Trust

Protocol, Fairtrade, recycled, BCI, CmiA and GOTS or OCS-certified

2. Cotton blended with other plant-based fibres like flax, hemp, ramie, lotus and cellulosic fibres
3. Social audit from brands and buying houses to ensure equal opportunity to both genders, fair payment of wages and work benefits like EPF, ESI and termination benefits like gratuity, pension and strict adherence to applicable labour laws along with sexual harassment committee headed by women director and lawyer and elimination of work hazards while in transit and field work.

Sharing some of the key benefits of being a member of the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol, Ilavarasu mentions that choosing U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol cotton will give brands and retailers the critical assurances they need that the cotton fibre element of their supply chain is more sustainably grown with lower environmental and social risks. Brands and retailers will gain access to U.S. cotton with sustainability credentials proven via Field to Market, measured via the Fieldprint® calculator and verified with Control Union Certifications. “By joining the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol, we are sure that we buy responsibly produced, quality fibre, and reduce environmental and social risk in our supply chain,” he states. ♦

JOIN NOW

U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol

Setting a new standard for more sustainable cotton production

The Trust Protocol provides, for the first time, annual and verified data to brands and retailers for seven areas of sustainability aligned with the U.N. Sustainability Goals.



Through third-party verification, robust data inputs and bale-to-mill trackability, the Trust Protocol gives brands and retailers the critical assurances they need to prove the cotton fiber element of their supply chain is more sustainably grown with lower environmental and social risk.

The more sustainable cotton choice, today and tomorrow.

To learn more contact:

Kraipob Pangsapa
kpangsapa@cotton.org



To become a member visit

TrustUSCotton.org



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