

► Improving Cotton's Environmental Footprint

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U.S. cotton producers are leading the way in responsible cotton production practices. Through the support of research and implementation of technology U.S. cotton production is on path to continual improvement. As a result of these efforts since 1980, cotton production has made great progress in conserving the resources used to grow cotton.

- Land use – 30% reduction
- Soil erosion – 68% reduction
- Irrigation water applied – 75% reduction
- Energy use – 31% reduction
- Greenhouse gas emissions – 22% reduction

Field to Market: The Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture

Field to Market is a diverse alliance working to create opportunities across the agricultural supply chain for continuous improvements in productivity, environmental quality, and human well-being. One tool created by Field to Market to educate and motivate U.S. commodity producers to continue their progress and identify areas for improvement on their farm is the “Fieldprint” calculator. Through this tool they can enter data on their specific production practices for any field on their farm and see how they rank according to national and state averages. As the producer reviews his or her results they can see what aspects of their operation had the biggest impact on a number of outcome-based metrics: land use; soil conservation; soil health (reflected by soil carbon status); irrigation water use efficiency; energy use; greenhouse gas emissions; and water quality. This tool is available to all U.S. producers.

Spider graphs similar to those below are included in the output from the calculator. The national average for each metric is normalized to be half way from the center to the outside edge of the graph giving it the symmetrical shape. The state average is the other non-symmetrical line on the graph. The shaded area represents the footprint of the field from which the data was collected. The environmental footprint is improved as the shaded area becomes smaller. The spider graphs below are examples from one field documenting the improvement in their environmental footprint by modifying cultural practices.

