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Program Handbook

Responsible Brazilian Cotton

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Introduction



The **Responsible Brazilian Cotton program (Programa Algodão Brasileiro Responsável – ABR)** is publishing a series of handbooks on how its new material topics relate to sustainability.

In this edition, we will explain the ABR in an accessible, concise way and go over the certification's key areas as well as provide the necessary details to understand how it works.

The information in this handbook is crucial for the recognition of the benefits of applying the social-environmental protocol and its importance to Brazilian cotton farming.

Enjoy your reading!



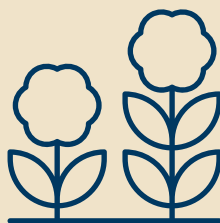
What is ABR?



The Responsible Brazilian Cotton program (Programa Algodão Brasileiro Responsável – ABR) is the national standard for the **social-environmental certification** of Brazilian cotton farming. It was created in 2012 by Abrapa.

Its goal is to promote a sustainable future through **responsible practices** in cotton production, ensuring the **wellbeing of workers**, the **conservation of natural resources**, and **climate resilience**, so that communities and ecosystems develop in a harmonious way.

81%



of Brazil's total cotton production is **ABR***

*Based on the 2024/2025 crop season.

State Associations



The ABR is managed by **Abrapa** on a national level; it is executed locally by state associations that support local farmers, **disseminate best agricultural practices, ensure the quality of the certification, and strengthen Brazilian cotton farming.**

Additionally, the associations develop social projects and high-impact initiatives together with the communities surrounding the hundreds of production units covered by the social-environmental protocol.







How does the program work?

1st step | Enrollment

The state associations affiliated with Abrapa are responsible for guiding farmers and enrolling them into the ABR Program. Their technical teams train producers and ensure the necessary support to make the process official.

[Check out your state's local association and who you should contact here!](#)





2nd step | Diagnosis

The technical teams at the cotton farmers' state associations go through the ABR Program's checklist. If there are issues to be addressed the associations provide farmers with an improvement plan, and their farms will then be assessed according to the goals set in said plan.

3rd step | Scheduling the audit

The production units are audited by an independent team, which validates the checklist's requirements by checking if the information provided is correct and whether the responsible practices adopted by the protocol are being performed. This step usually happens between February and July.

4th step | Result

If the auditors' final report is positive, the farm receives the ABR certification; by meeting additional requirements, it is also eligible to receive the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) license. This step happens as the visits from auditors are completed.



Key considerations

The prohibition of child labor, forced labor or slavery-like conditions, and undignified or degrading work on rural properties, as well as the freedom of association and the prohibition of discrimination are considered **Minimum Production Criteria**. Compliance is mandatory in order to be certified.

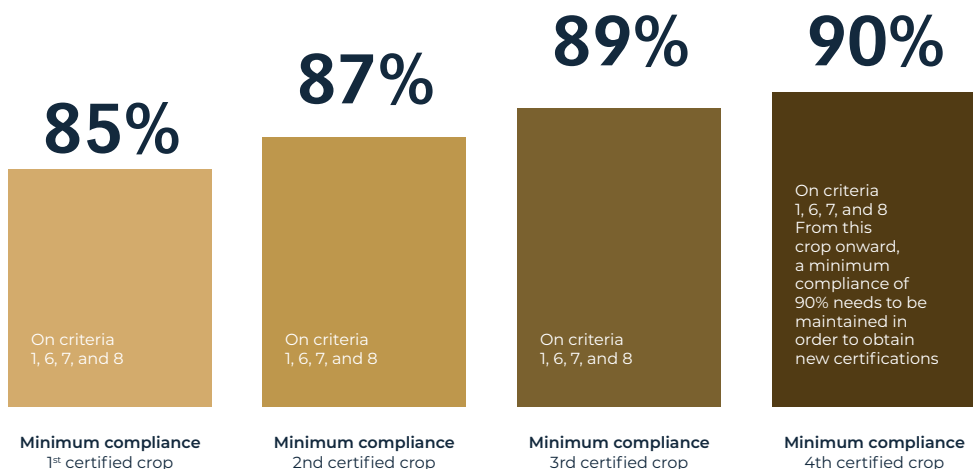
Complying with at least **85% of the protocol's requirements** during the first assessed crop season is needed in order to obtain the certification; this percentage needs to increase every year, which is an encouragement to seek the **continuous improvement** of the certified farm in terms of social and environmental requirements.

[Check out the full checklist and find more info here!](#)





Necessary degree of compliance





International recognition

The ABR certification is a partner of Better Cotton, the **world's largest cotton sustainability program**. Through this certification, interested farmers can receive the BCI license, the main international protocol to attest to best practices adopted in lint production.

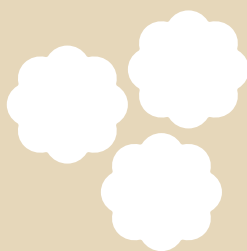
This partnership – which was first established in 2013 – helped drive Brazilian cotton fiber's global recognition, thus consolidating Brazil's current position as the **world's biggest producer of responsible cotton**.

This partnership's main goal is to disseminate **responsible cotton farming practices** and promote farming that is increasingly committed to social-environmental aspects.





48%



of the lint certified by
Better Cotton in the world
is produced in Brazil!*

*Based on the 2023/2024 crop season.





Pillars



The ABR Program is guided by three key pillars that are associated with **ESG** themes. All actions promoted by the protocol are established according to those themes, thus ensuring the **sustainable management** of **environmental**, **social**, and **governance** topics.

The pillars also define the key guidelines that govern all steps of the certification process, including the definition of criteria and requirements.





Social and community development

- Workers' health and wellbeing
- Regional development
- Prevention and prohibition of child and forced labor
- Promotion of diversity and inclusion practices (especially gender)



Environmental management

- Soil health
- Integrated pest management
- Biodiversity conservation
- Climate adaptation and mitigation
- Water resource management



Best governance practices

- Commitment to transparency
- Complying with environmental standards and legislation
- Ensuring respect for and promotion of workers' rights and the rights of local communities and aligning with the International Labour Organization (ILO)'s prerogatives
- Total production traceability



Criteria

Nine criteria represent the conditions that need to be met in order to comply with the certification's requirements. In addition to their alignment with **Brazilian legislation**, they also consider the **best sustainability standards** in cotton farming.

The ABR Program incorporates **180 verification items**, which must be addressed by the production units seeking to obtain the protocol. These items are periodically re-evaluated during each crop season, ensuring **constant updates** according to regulatory changes.

For the BCI license, **17 additional criteria** are assessed in the audit, such as those related to local communities and to committing to discontinuing pesticide use.





Complying with the international organization's chain of custody requirements, delivering BCI indicators' reports, diligence, and the reduction in the total use of pesticides per hectare are additional conditions that farmers need to meet in order to request an international license.

Criterion 01 – **Work contract**

Criterion 02 – **Prohibition of child labor**

Criterion 03 – **Prohibition of forced labor or slavery-like conditions**

Criterion 04 – **Freedom of association**

Criterion 05 – **Prohibition of discrimination**

Criterion 06 – **Occupational Health, Safety, and Environment**

Criterion 07 – **Environmental performance**

Criterion 08 – **Best agricultural practices**

Criterion 09 – **Unit management***

*Only applicable to production units that opt for the Better Cotton (BCI) license.

[Learn more about the criteria on the technical guide.](#)



Commitment to the future



Innovation, adaptation, and commitment are essential for the future of cotton farming. For that reason, we evolve during each crop season to strengthen **climate resilience**, enhance **diversity** in farming, expand **traceability**, and communicate Brazil's advancements in the production of sustainable cotton to the world.

The ABR Program was created to go beyond the production of quality fiber; it aims to emphasize cotton farming's commitment to a **more sustainable**, fairer, more competitive **future**. It is a path to prepare the industry for the challenges of the next decades, leaving a positive legacy for new generations.





Why become abr?

Since 2012, ABR is the **national cotton social-environmental certification standard in Brazil**. The certification favors transparency, traceability, and sustainability in the cotton production chain, by taking care of soil and those who make a living out of it, as well as believing that farming only flourishes when there's dignified work, safety, inclusion, and diversity.





Social-environmental recognition: Endorses sustainability, social responsibility, and governance best practices.

Value added to production: Adds credibility and differentiation to Brazil's cotton within local and global markets.

Access to demanding markets: Unlocks commercial opportunities with brands and companies that prioritize certified raw materials.

Improved management: Implements more stringent controls of performance, traceability, and legal compliance indicators.

Environmental preservation: Favors the rational use of raw materials, waste management, and native vegetation conservation practices.

Regional development: Advances job creation and strengthens communities where cotton is produced.

Reduction in regulatory fines: Ensures that labor and environmental matters do not result in fines for the production units.

Risk reduction: Mitigates labor and environmental issues, as well as other matters that influence reputation.

Technical support: Provides content that helps the continuous advancement of agricultural, environmental, and management practices.





Did you know?





ABR was recognized by the [Agro Brasil + Sustentável Program](#) as an initiative that meets the minimum requirements for Best Agricultural Practices established by the [Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply Ordinance n. 337](#) of November 8, 2021.

As a result, owners of farms certified by ABR during the 2023/2024 crop season were eligible to request financial institutions a 0.5% interest rate reduction on operating credit from the 2024/2025 Plano Safra (Harvest Plan), in accordance with National Monetary Council (CMN) Resolution n. 5,152 of July 3, 2024.

[Learn more on the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock website!](#)





2024/2025 crop season highlights

1st place
on the global cotton export ranking



81%
of all cotton produced
in Brazil came from
ABR-certified farms

92%
of rainfed production
in ABR-certified cotton





43,600

direct and formal jobs were
created at the certified units

3.35 million

tons of certified
cotton grown





Learn more

ABR Program

Visit the ABR website for detailed information about the certification and enroll now!

[ABR website](#)

Associations

Reach out to state associations affiliated with Abrapa to join ABR.

[ABR - website - associations](#)

Better Cotton

Learn more about Better Cotton, the world's largest cotton sustainability program.

[Better Cotton website](#)





Sou ABR

You should also learn more about Sou ABR, an initiative by the Sou de Algodão (Made of Cotton) movement that encourages responsible fashion and conscious consumption; it enables full traceability of garments made with ABR-certified cotton.

[Sou ABR website](#)

ABR-UBA and ABR-LOG

The ABR Program also has specific certifications for cotton gins, ensuring best practices in post-harvesting processing, and for off-dock terminals, thus promoting more sustainable cotton export activities. Learn more about these certifications!

[Abrapa website – ABR UBA](#)

[Abrapa website – ABR LOG](#)





The ABR is the result of a joint effort that strengthens Brazil's reputation as a global benchmark for the production of responsible cotton. It embodies the commitment to best environmental, social, and economic practices, and it shows the world that our fiber is grown with social and environmental respect.

Throughout this decade, cotton farmers have been reaping the benefits of this journey: a reduction in environmental and labor liabilities and the improvement of their farms' reputation. The ABR also contributes to opening doors into demanding markets, generating more trust and competitiveness for the whole industry.





ABR Program: Planting the seed of a more sustainable future and cultivating the pride of being Brazilian.





ALGODÃO BRASILEIRO RESPONSÁVEL
RESPONSIBLE BRAZILIAN COTTON

