

SUSTAINABILITY ISSUE BRIEF: EXPORTERS



CURRENT SITUATION

Your customers care about sustainability, and you should, too. The good news is that more than 95 percent of U.S. soybeans are grown sustainably. It's important to talk about the sustainable practices that U.S. soybean farmers are already using to improve the sustainability of U.S. soy and to show proof to your customers that you are providing a sustainable commodity.

SUSTAINABILITY PROTOCOL

To demonstrate U.S. soybean farmers' sustainability, the U.S. soy family, consisting of the American Soybean Association, the U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC), the United Soybean Board and numerous state soybean boards, developed the [U.S. Soybean Sustainability Assurance Protocol \(SSAP\)](http://ussec.org/resources/ssap/) (<http://ussec.org/resources/ssap/>). The protocol is a certified, aggregate approach to the sustainability performance of U.S. soybean production. The data used is regularly compiled by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and other sources that collect it from U.S. soybean farmers through existing government programs.

Buyers can use the [Soy Export Sustainability Certificate Portal](https://certification.ussec.org/) (<https://certification.ussec.org/>) to track and verify the certification process of soybeans and soy products produced in the United States that are compliant with the SSAP. Visit the portal to acquire a certificate of sustainability for your shipments of U.S. soy to show buyers your sustainability commitment.

U.S. SOY SUSTAINABILITY STATISTICS

There are a number of sustainable practices that U.S. soybean farmers are already using day after day, year after year. And they're continually working to improve their sustainability. Here are a few of the practices that U.S. farmers are using to produce more than 95 percent of U.S. soybeans in a sustainable manner.

Crop Rotation

- 94 percent of soybean acres are under continuously rotated plantings, contributing to increased biodiversity.
- Crop rotation increases biodiversity, helps control pests, prevents disease resistance and replaces vital nutrients in the soil, reducing the need for chemical fertilizers.

Water Management

- 94 percent of U.S. farmland is non-irrigated
- U.S. soybean farmers use no-till farming, grass filter strips, cover crops and more to manage their most precious resource – water. These practices help slow runoff from fields, trapping and filtering sediment, nutrients, pesticides and more before they reach surface waters.

Reduced Tillage

- 70 percent of U.S. soybean acres use conservation tillage, including no-till.
- U.S. soybean farmers use reduced-tillage practices to preserve the soil's nutrients, increase organic matter, reduce runoff and soil erosion and to keep more water available for plants. But reduced tillage also reduces labor, fuel use and equipment wear, saving soybean farmers time and money.

Pest Management

- 95 percent of U.S. soybean farmers personally scout their fields each season to manage pests.
- Pests are a real problem for farmers across the country, but U.S. soybean farmers only use chemical intervention when needed. Farmers are using non-chemical solutions such as scouting, careful equipment cleaning and crop rotation to limit the spread of weeds. When chemicals are necessary to eliminate the problem, farmers carefully determine proper timing and spray coverage to limit pest resistance, runoff and residues.

Nutrient Management

- 92 percent of U.S. soybean farmers have tested their soil to maintain proper nutrient levels.
- U.S. soybean farmers frequently test their soils, maintain nutrient-management plans, know recommended nutrient levels, and apply adequate nutrients as needed. This strict attention to detail helps soybean farmers maintain and build more productive soil, reduce over-application and protect water quality.

Detailed Recordkeeping

- 95 percent of U.S. counties have soil maps and data available online.
- Recordkeeping is the often unsung hero of sustainability. Many soybean farmers keep detailed records of all their farming practices, including planted acreage, annual yield for each field, all inputs for each field and proper calibration levels for all planting equipment. All these notes help farmers reduce waste and run leaner, meaner operations.

Precision Farming

- U.S. soybean farmers use GPS and computer monitors in their tractors, sprayers and combines to track yield and inputs. That way, they can change seeding and application rates down to square inches, ensuring that they put the perfect amount of seed, fertilizer and other inputs on the field. This helps farmers to work most efficiently, minimizing inputs and costs and maximizing yields.

Conservation

- 10 percent of U.S. farmland is left out of production to protect sensitive areas.
- U.S. soybean farmers have a long history of creating and participating in programs to help preserve wildlife habitats and improve biodiversity. Environmental practices such as buffer strips, filter strips, waterways and terraces are common across most farms. By caring for the air, water and land around them, soybean farmers are not only improving where they live, they're preserving the land and natural resources for their future generations.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- www.SustainableSoy.com
- USSEC – Sustainability: <http://ussec.org/resource-category/sustainability/>
- United Soybean Board: Sustainability: <http://unitedsoybean.org/topics/sustainability/>
- Field to Market: The Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture: <https://www.fieldtomarket.org/>
- The Sustainability Alliance: www.thesustainabilityalliance.us
- Soy Bio-based Products: <http://www.soybiobased.org/>

WHY USSEC CARES ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

USSEC is a dynamic partnership of key stakeholders representing soybean producers, commodity shippers, merchandisers, allied agribusinesses and agricultural organizations. The mission of USSEC is to build a preference for U.S. soybeans and soybean products, and sustainability is a key piece of the puzzle. The sustainability of U.S. soy is a differentiating factor separating U.S. soy from its competitors in the international and domestic marketplace. To capture this value, USSEC developed the SSAP through a multi-stakeholder process to address customer requests for a supply of documented and certified sustainable soy. Certification under SSAP is provided by USSEC subsidiary Soy Export Sustainability (SES).