



## The Importance of Bale Purchases in Classing Operations



Most stakeholders of the AMS, Cotton and Tobacco Program (C&T) are familiar with the classing services we provide to our customers but what many might not know is what happens behind the scenes to support the classing operations. To assure quality grading services, the C&T Program utilizes standardized materials to assure the precision, accuracy, and consistency of the

entire grading process. The Cotton & Tobacco Program's Standardization & Engineering Division produces and distributes these standards within all of its regional offices and to customers worldwide each year.

To provide these standards, C&T relies on cooperation from our classing offices and the National Database to help locate the needed cotton qualities from each crop that qualify as cottons to use as standards. We then reach out to U.S. cotton producers, ginners and merchants who are willing to sell us the targeted cotton bales from the current crop. On average, USDA purchases approximately 220 bales per year.



These bales are used to produce the physical grade standards and instrument calibration and verification standards which are distributed around the world. The process to produce the physical grade standards alone requires 102 bales representing very distinct color ranges indicated by their color Rd and +b measurements. The bales secured for creating calibration and verification cottons are transported to the C&T headquarters warehouse in Memphis, TN where they are stored and eventually evaluated through a comprehensive testing program. The values for the calibration and verification cottons

are established using a very complex process in multiple locations and very strict parameters. The C&T Program stores all of these bales in its warehouse and continues to use them until they are extinguished.



Without securing these bales, we would not be able to properly represent the official standards. Although we realize we are not always the most convenient customer to those marketing their cotton, we send a huge “thank you” to every one of you who help us in this

process each year. Together we continue to provide the world’s cotton quality standards and promote U.S. cotton around the globe.

