



# India and the ProTerra Standard

## 25.06.2025



A close-up photograph of three small green seedlings with two leaves each, growing out of dark brown soil.

# Agenda

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- A close-up photograph of a person's hand, with fingers carefully placing a small, light-colored seed into a hole in the soil.
- Emese van Maanen, ProTerra Foundation  
**Introduction and the ProTerra Indian Interpretation**
  - Apte Mayuresh, SGS India  
**ProTerra COC certification, The Indian Perspective**
  - Emese van Maanen, ProTerra Foundation  
**Certification challenges in India**
  - Q & A





# Who we are

The ProTerra Foundation is a non-for-profit organization, located in the Netherlands.  
We envisage a world where all businesses:

- Contribute to the protection of biodiversity
- Conserve natural resources and
- Ensure that workers and local communities are treated with dignity and respect

# Who we are

ProTerra Foundation is the owner of the ProTerra Certification Standard and its Interpretations:

- ProTerra Standard v5.0
  - *ProTerra Europa*
  - *ProTerra Smallholders*
- ProTerra Insecta
- ProTerra MRV (Monitoring and Verification)

ProTerra Standards specialise in promoting social and environmental sustainability through the food and supply chains.





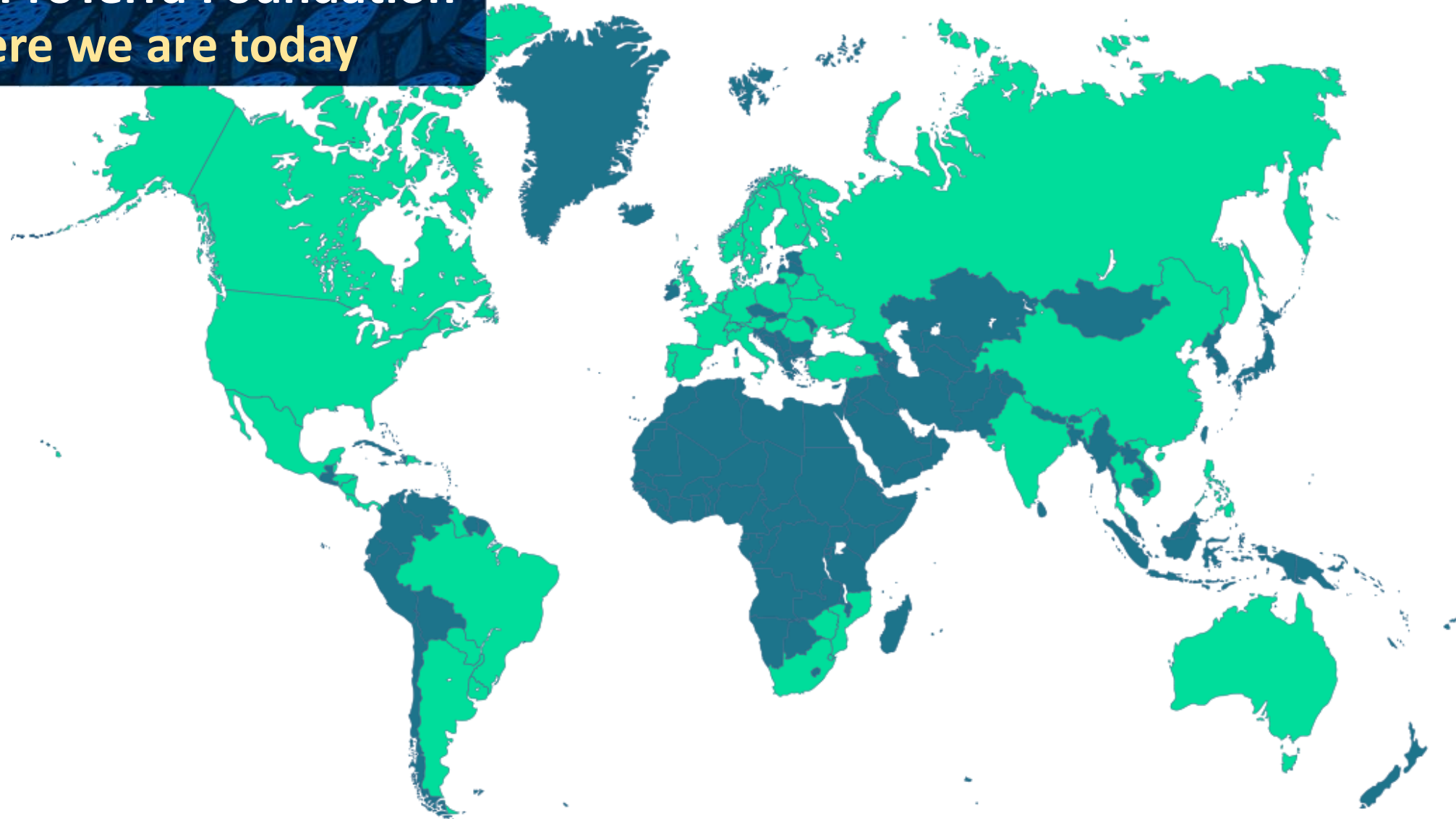
# ProTerra solutions

The ProTerra Standard covers all areas of sustainability and is **globally** applicable to **all crops**.



# The ProTerra Foundation

## Where we are today



Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Eswatini, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Guadelupe, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, India, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, México, Mozambique, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Vietnam, Zimbabwe.



# The ProTerra Foundation in numbers

## SOY 2024



### CERTIFIED SOY VOLUME

TOTAL 2022	2.392.431,51
TOTAL 2023	2.533.321,24
TOTAL 2024	1.926.970,88

### MRV VERIFIED SOY VOLUME

TOTAL 2024	684.568,00
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# The ProTerra Foundation in numbers

## SUGARCANE 2024



SUGARCANE ANNUAL CRUSH (mt)

	2022	2023	2024
■	43.626.756,76	43.086.555,24	53.259.608,08
■	10.081.760,12	9.721.763,94	7.681.618,62
Total	53.708.516,88	52.808.319,18	60.941.226,64

■ verification  
■ certification



# Use the ProTerra Standard to manage and mitigate risks

GMO PRESENCE



LAND CONVERSION



LABOUR CONDITIONS



PESTICIDE USE

LAND CONFLICTS



A photograph of a lush green tea plantation on a hillside, with rows of tea bushes stretching into the distance under a clear sky.

## The role of certification

- For a consumer company, **sustainably certified materials** bring several advantages in the supply chain.
- The ProTerra Standard only certifies producers who meet requirements (a range of environmental and social criteria) including deforestation and land conversion, biodiversity, agricultural practices (including bans on the use of harmful pesticides and GMO crops), labour practices and FPIC.

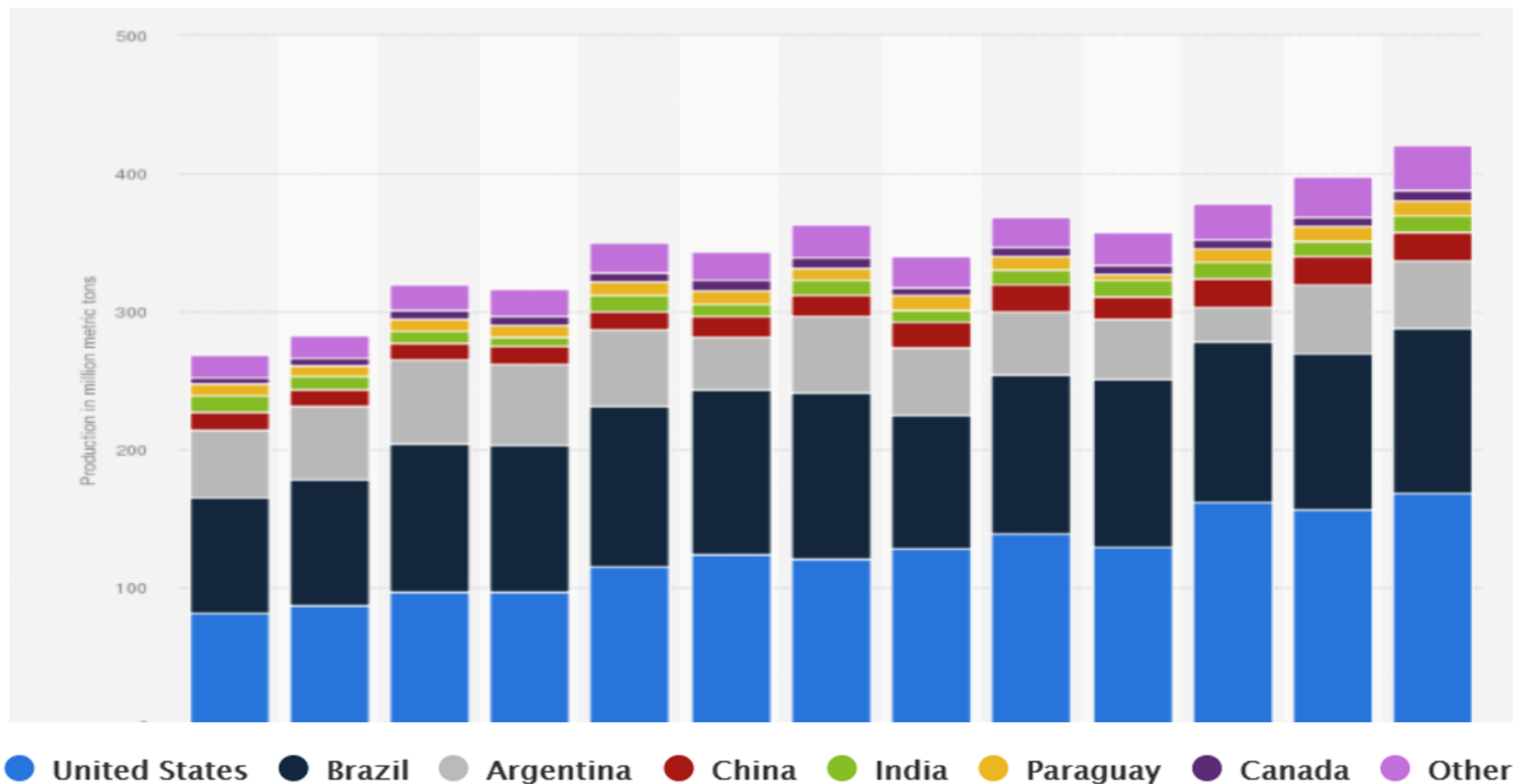




## Soybean production in India



# Soybean production worldwide 2013-2024

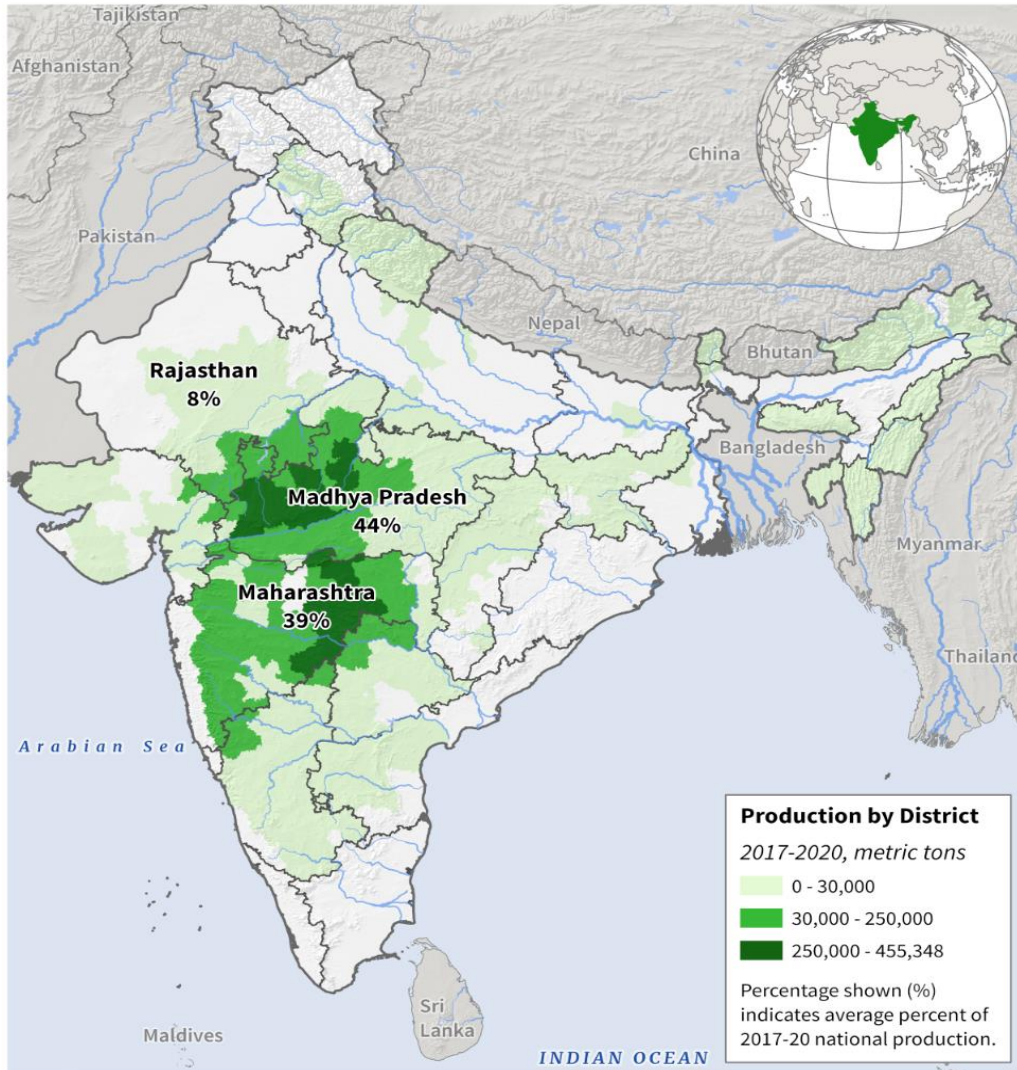


Source: Statista

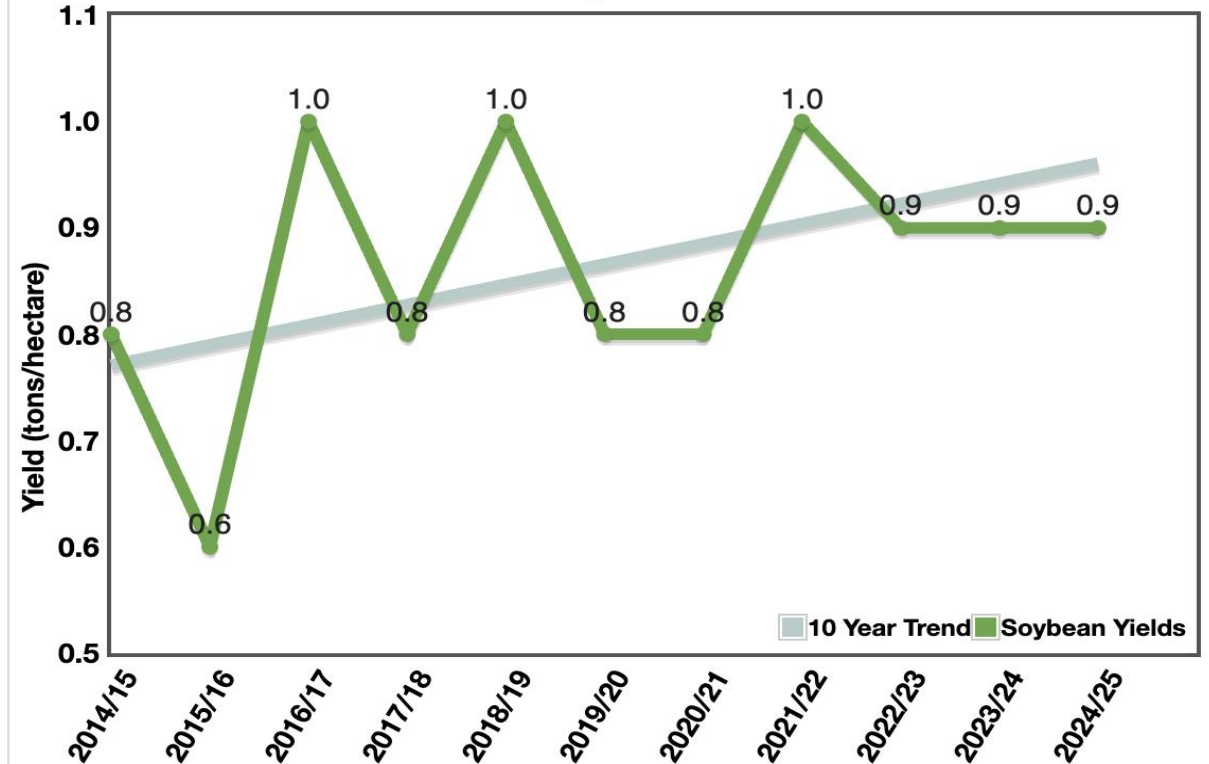


# Soybean in the Indian economy

## India: Soybean Production



## India Soybean Yields







# ProTerra Standard V5.0

## India Interpretation





# Regional Interpretations

We recognise that in many parts of the world, there is a **gap between the reality and requirements of ProTerra sustainable agricultural practices and food/feed production**. Therefore, regional interpretations are necessary to help businesses engage and ultimately implement over time a sustainable approach to their activities.

The concept of **continuous improvement** is an essential aspect of any regional interpretation. In the **ideal scenario, organisations would reach a full alignment with the ProTerra Standard** in the long run (understood as the full version of the document).

## ProTerra Interpretation for smallholders

**The ProTerra India interpretation will be applicable only to smallholders**

- A smallholder in India is considered to be any agricultural property owned by an individual or a group of individuals (not a company) with less than 2 hectares.
- Reduced set of indicators applies

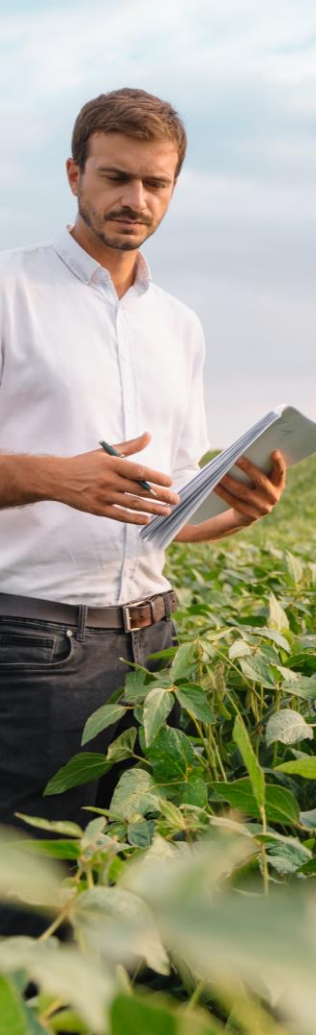
**The ProTerra India interpretation will be applicable only to smallholders**




## ProTerra Interpretation for smallholders

Stepwise approach :

- A set of ProTerra requirements are to be met in the initial certification (**entry level** of ProTerra India Smallholder Interpretation);
- An additional set of requirements must be met by the beginning of the third year of certification (**intermediate level** of ProTerra India Smallholder Interpretation), and
- All requirements to be met by the end of the fifth year of certification (**advanced level** of the ProTerra India Smallholder Interpretation).




## ProTerra Interpretation for smallholders

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- A vertical image on the left side of the slide showing a person in a white lab coat and blue gloves using a pipette to transfer liquid into a petri dish. There are other petri dishes and a small plant on the lab bench.
- At the end of the initial certification, participants may reach the intermediate or advanced level (should they meet all the necessary requirements)
  - For terms and definitions, GMO risk in crops and listing of forbidden pesticides should refer to ProTerra Standard version 5.0
  - The ProTerra Certification Protocol applies and a **specific** farm sampling approach will be defined



## ProTerra Interpretation for smallholders

A vertical image on the left side of the slide showing a person in a white lab coat and blue gloves using a pipette to add liquid to a petri dish containing a green agar medium. A petri dish with green leaf samples is visible in the foreground.

As this interpretation is reduced in relation to ProTerra Standard, **any certification or communication related to the certification of a smallholder must clearly indicate the specific reference to *ProTerra India Smallholder Interpretation*** and to the associated level (entry, intermediate or advanced).

This will ensure a transparent communication with the stakeholders.

## PROTERRA STANDARD FOR SMALLHOLDERS

Scenario 1	Applicable Standard	Compliance Level	Certificate Issued
Crushers / Processors	ProTerra v5.0	Full Compliance to V5.0	ProTerra Certificate
Farmers	ProTerra V5.0	Full Compliance to V5.0	ProTerra Certificate

Scenario 1 = **Each actor** in the food and feed supply chain **can be certified in its own right** against the applicable ProTerra Standard set of indicators.  
Ideal Scenario but away from the current reality in India.



# PROTERRA STANDARD FOR SMALLHOLDERS

Scenario 2	Applicable Standard	Compliance Level	Certificate Issued
Crushers / Processors	ProTerra v5.0	Full Compliance to V5.0	ProTerra Certificate
Farmers	ProTerra Smallholder Interpretation v3.0	Entry, Intermediate or Advanced	No certificate. Verification audit as a part of the Level III (crusher/processor) supply chain

Scenario 2 = Farms as suppliers of a **processor seeking certification** (must likely scenarios considering the current reality in India)

## PROTERRA STANDARD FOR SMALLHOLDERS

### Sampling Criteria\*

Number of smallholders	Sample size
Less than 50	20% of the total number of farms
>50	Square root of the total number of farms

*\*Auditor may change the sampling size based on the risks, homogeneity and practical experience gained and should aim at defining a statistically representative sample size.*

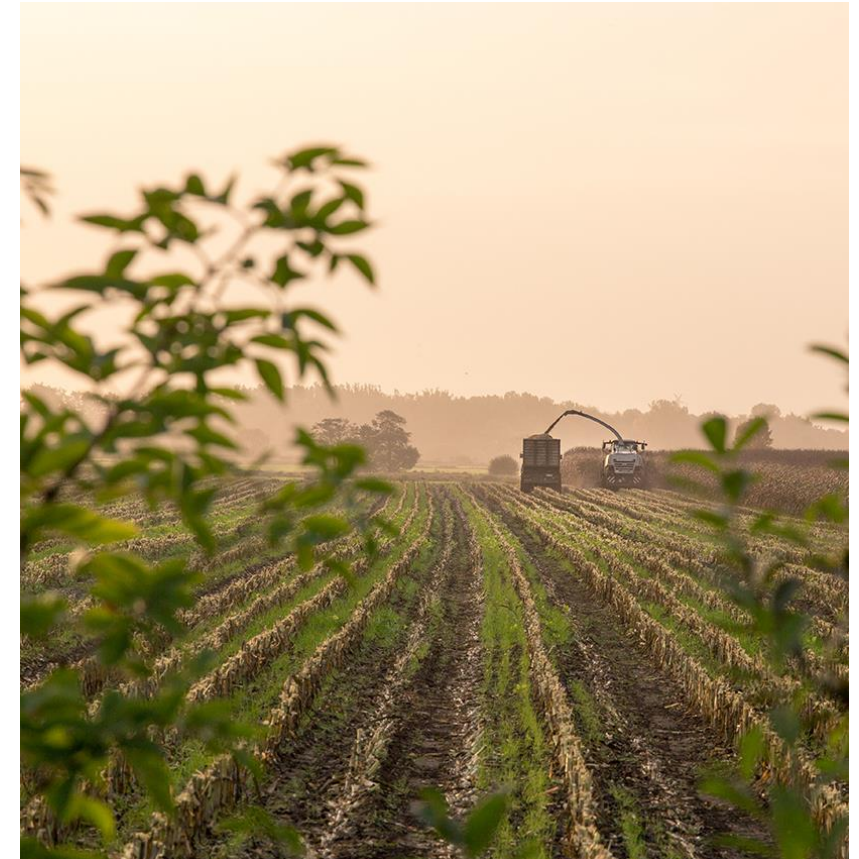


ProTerra COC Certification- Smallholder

Indian Perspective

# Overview

- ProTerra COC certification started in India in the year 2020.
- Presently, Proterra certification is obtained by soybean seed and processed products handling industries in India.
- All the existing certifications are the chain of custody module and cover the assessment of processing factories, store/transport facilities and farmers.
- Due to the small land holding size of the farmers in soybean cultivating regions, the number of farmers covered in Proterra COC is higher, but the covered land size is relatively smaller.
- In numbers, more than 200 thousand farmers are currently registered under ProTerra; however, the land size coverage is approximately 350 thousand hectares.





# Context to ProTerra COC certification- Smallholders


The average land holding per farmer is observed to be less than 2 hectares in the soybean growing region, which is the central part of India.

The farmers are highly unorganized and maintaining the farming as ancestral livelihood meaning rather than commercial activity.


The education and awareness level also observed to be low in maximum farmer community.

However, in recent few years, the scenario is changing a bit. Few farmer producer organizations are being set up with the help of NGO's and Processing factories through their CSR activities.


# Initial challenges



Remote areas and not easy to access roads to some villages, hence reaching out to farmers.

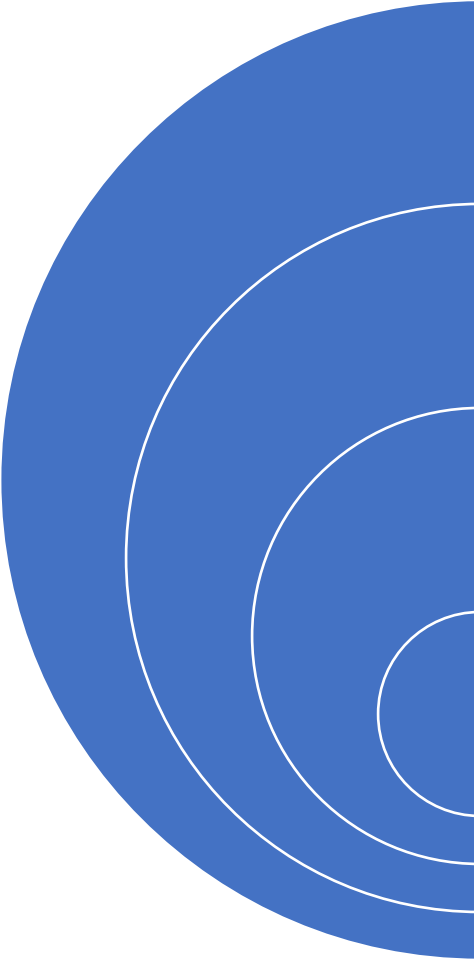


Farmers were hesitant to communicate openly during the interviews.



Farmers were not keeping adequate records of seed stock/fertilizer/pesticide used for the crop.

# Changing Scenarios and way forward

Four concentric blue semi-circles on the left side of the slide, increasing in size from top to bottom, corresponding to the four text boxes.

With the introduction of CSR activities, forming the farmer producer groups, the awareness level about the legal compliance, record keeping is seen increasing among the farmers.

The next generation coming into farming, using sustainable techniques is on the rise. E.g., use of organic pesticides instead of synthetic chemical-based ones.

More efforts required to spread the awareness about sustainable farming, use of organic farming practices to cover the maximum farmland under the same.

The processor companies require to maintain the farm to factory traceability of the certified input material till finished product in more detailed way.



## Challenges

- Only a **few companies control** most of the exports
- **Limited flow of information**
- **The need for transparency: Transparency and traceability** within the soy supply chain remain key barriers for companies to fully understand their own potential impacts
- **Complexity**
- **Number of farms** in the supply chain
- The need for **training**
- Businesses have **no certainty** about how responsible their supply chain is
- Making **informed decisions** is a challenge
- **Record-keeping**



## ProTerra farm audits in India Overview

- Around 75000 farmers are participating in ProTerra certification in India and the number is increasing.
- The major issues identified during the farm audits:
  - Record keeping for seed, harvest yields are not maintained by most of the farmers in 1st year. For the 2nd year, we have seen that more than 50% of farmers have started keeping farm records with details.
  - Use of own seed for next year. Hence, no proper test of fertility was done.
  - In a few cases, the use of PPE while using insecticides was not consistent.
  - Most of the smallholders do not hire external workers or very minimal seasonal labour. However, formal pay register or records are not maintained.
- Overall, it was seen that **record keeping** is a grey area, and it is mainly due to the literacy level among the farmers.

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a soybean pod. The pod is open, revealing three bright yellow seeds inside. The background is a soft-focus green.

## Challenges in the farm audits

- The initial challenge was to make the sites understand the farm audit requirement and get engaged.
- The sites also found it difficult to convince the smallholder farming community to have the audit team visit their farms, have a discussion and a verification carried out.
- A challenge during the actual audit was the non-availability of sufficient documents and records of seeds, use of fertilizers, etc.



## Challenges in the farm audits

- Communication with farmers was also challenging due to the language barrier in certain parts. India has a large number of local languages, which are very different from each other, and auditors need an interpreter or mediator for communication.
- Due to the small size of farms, the farmers are engaging all family members in farm activities. Hence, during the harvesting period, visiting the farms and having discussions with them is a challenge. A few farmers were not ready to dedicate time to talk with auditors.



# Thank you for your attention!

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