I’ve been thinking...
Terry Hollifield, Executive Director

Spring appears to finally be coming to Georgia. YEH! With the recent 80 degree days I bet all farmers are starting to think about a fresh spring start. The entire process - deciding which crop to plant, tilling land, getting the planters ready - gets most farmers out of the doldrums of winter. Being a seed person, the first thing I think of is “SEED”, what else? I thought this may be a good time to visit the different sources of seed farmers have available to them.

The first is known as farmer to farmer seed. History has shown us that this source of seed is usually of the poorest or unknown quality. Not to say that some farmers can’t produce good quality seed, but more often than not, this is not a good source of seed. Farmer to farmer seed does not have to meet any standards and often is not properly labeled as required by state and federal seed laws. The seller has little liability if the seed does not perform to the buyer’s expectations. And for most newer crop varieties, it may actually be illegal for your neighbor to market seed to you. The Plant Variety Protection Act (PVP) and the patent laws are very specific about which varieties can be sold as farmer to farmer seed. Remember, cheap seed is usually worth what you pay for it.

Professionally grown seed are generally produced by companies that are in the seed business. These companies comply with state and federal seed laws relating to labeling and meet state, federal and often seed company standards. A seed analysis report is always available upon request. This report will verify and document what is printed on the seed tag or label. You will always know the quality of the product in the bag. However, remember that professionally grown seed only has to meet the minimum standards of the state seed law. Seed produced by companies may have germination as low as 70%, depending on the crop, and make contain high numbers of noxious and common weed seed, plus may contain up to 5% other crop.

Certified seed are produced by seed companies and individual growers who participate in GCIA’s Seed Certification Program. This program is designed to assure the end user, the Southeastern farmer, of planting the highest quality seed possible. Certified seed producers plant either foundation or registered class seed that is never more than two generations away from breeder seed. Certified seed is (1) field inspected by GCIA inspectors for trueness to variety, (2) free of common and noxious weeds, (3) free of other contaminating crops, and (4) conditioned in an approved facility designed to size and grade seed. All certified seed must have an official sample taken of the conditioned seed and be analyzed by an approved laboratory. All certified seed must meet specific standards relating to seed quality based on the seed laboratory report which can be found at www.certifiedseed.org or by reading the certified seed tag attached to each bag of certified seed. By visiting our web site, a farmer can see who offers certified seed of specific crops and varieties for sale. We believe that “Certified” seed are the elite seed of the industry and Southeastern farmers deserve the best.
Preparing for Peanut Planting
Dr. Scott Tubbs, UGA Cropping Systems Agronomist

The time is near, getting your equipment in gear, but Mother Nature still sheds a tear. Temperatures have been increasing in South Georgia in the early days of April, which means it’s almost time to drop some peanut seed in the ground. Yet, rains are still falling across most peanut producing areas, so be patient and don’t jump the gun. We want growers to give their seed the best chance of survival so they are not faced with additional problems after establishment.

One of the most critical, but easiest things to control is planting date based on soil conditions. It has long been recommended to monitor the soil temperature at the 4-inch depth and use this as a guide for when to trigger planting. Data in recent years from several research projects have demonstrated reduced germination when temperatures drop below 68°F. While we have reached or slightly exceeded 68°F in many locations during the weekend of April 5-6, rainfall followed by cooler temperatures is dropping the soil temperature rapidly again. Average soil temperatures dropped from 3 to 5 degrees in one day after the rains on April 5 for most areas in South Georgia according to the Georgia Automated Weather Network (www.georgiaweather.net), and are expected to trend downward with forecast lows below 50°F through April 10 in many areas.

While the moisture is needed and welcomed to assist with germination, cool temperatures and large fluctuations in temperature can shock the seed and leave a field with poor and erratic plant stands. Please monitor the 4-inch soil temperature and let it stabilize with daily averages above 68°F for at least three consecutive days before considering planting, while also keeping an eye on the forecast air temperatures for the subsequent 5 days to watch for conditions that might cause soil temperatures to plummet (overnight low temps below 50°F, daily high temps that don’t reach 70°F, or rainfall). Germination tests out of the Seed Regulatory Program of the Georgia Department of Agriculture have demonstrated that Georgia-06G seed has struggled in the laboratory’s cold testing. While overall seed quality appears to be good, we don’t want to push seed stress by placing them in unfavorable conditions such as cool soil temperatures from planting too early.

Clements Reappointed to Georgia Seed Development Commission

During the 2014 Legislative Session, the Senate Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee unanimously reappointed Mr. Jimmy Clements of Albany to the Georgia Seed Development Commission. Georgia Seed Development is responsible for foundation plant material production in Georgia and works closely with GCIA. Georgia Seed Development is administratively assigned to the Department of Agriculture and has an 11 member board. With facilities in Athens and Plains, GSD works diligently to meet the seed needs of seed companies and farmers across the state. Congratulations to Jimmy on his continued to service GSD!
Dr. Clint Waltz, UGA Turfgrass Specialist

Did you know three new National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) trials were planted in Griffin during 2013? Bermudagrass and zoysiagrass trials were established to evaluate cultivars maintained under home lawn conditions. While the third trial will evaluate a mixture of warm-season species specifically bred for golf course putting greens. The three trials include a total of 80 vegetative entries and 18 seeded bermudagrasses. Each trial was planted at multiple locations throughout the U.S., Griffin being one. It was planned for these trials to run for five years, with 2013 serving as an establishment year. However, with the severity of this past winter it is anticipated some winter damage occurred and there will be a need for some replanting. It is too early to determine the extent of any damage, but efforts are underway to make sure these trials are fully established and actively growing during 2014. Historically, NTEP trials have served Georgia’s turfgrass industry by providing researchers opportunity to understand the maintenance needs and abilities of new cultivars before they are released for commercial sale. Grasses planted in 2013 will be the grasses planted on sod farms and used on lawns, sports fields, and golf courses in the next 8-10 years.

To see the next generation of bermudagrasses and zoysiagrasses, plan on attending the UGA Turfgrass Research Field Day on August 6 in Griffin. As program and registration information become available it will be posted to the UGA Turfgrass website www.GeorgiaTurf.com.

Do you want timely information on turf? Do you use Twitter? If so, subscribe to my tweets for the Georgia turfgrass industry. I will tweet timely updates about current turf topics and information on our turfgrass educational programs. Follow me on Twitter by using the handle @GeorgiaTurf.

EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!

GCIA featured in several trade publications

February 24, 2014 Southeast Farm Press; Saving Seed: Better Know the Law; by Paul Hollis with quotes from Terry Hollifield; view online at http://southeastfarmpress.com/peanuts/saving-seed-better-know-law.


March / April 2014 Urban Ag Council Magazine; Certified turfgrass: GCIA’s blue certificate means quality; by Billy Skaggs; view online at www.urbanagcouncil.com.

Spring 2014 GFB’s Georgia Neighbors Magazine; Soybean & Small Grains Expo; featuring highlights from the February 7th Expo held at the Georgia National Fair, Perry; view online at www.gfb.org/news/publications.
On March 13th, the GCIA board of directors and staff welcomed over 80 members and guests to the 69th Annual Meeting in Athens. President Aaron McWhorter convened the meeting and introduced numerous speakers from across the industry, including Dr. John McKissick, UGA Center of Agribusiness & Economic Development; Bryan Tolar, Georgia Agribusiness Council; Brent Marable, UGA Research Foundation; Dr. Roger Boerma, Georgia Seed Development; and Bo Warren, Georgia Department of Agriculture.

Later in the morning, the Nominating Committee’s report was presented and the following individuals were approved as directors for the coming year: Kevin Calhoun, Ken Morrow and Scott Grimsley. GCIA thanks outgoing directors Larry Cunningham, Dale Lanier and Larry Redmond for their dedicated service. In addition, officers elected to serve in the coming year include Jaimie Allen, President; Ernie Purcell, Vice-President; Lane Morrell, 2nd Vice President; and Aaron McWhorter, Past President.

At the luncheon, Executive Director Terry Hollifield presented the members and guests with the 2013 Annual Report as well as thanked the GCIA staff for their service. In particular, Hollifield congratulated Ms. Elizabeth Mayfield, turfgrass administrative assistant, on her upcoming retirement.

Later in the day, the GCIA Commodity Committees (peanuts, small grains / soybeans, and turfgrass & forages) met at which time they addressed specific issues raised by committee members and GCIA staff. Meeting minutes (including any policy changes) are available upon request.

GCIA wishes to thank all those who attended the Annual Meeting! Good luck in 2014!

The Seed Laboratory celebrated “March Madness” with our usual heavy workload in samples, especially certified peanuts. The staff worked extra hours to keep up with the high volume of samples and still meet our 15-day turnaround goal. For the month of March, the Lab received a total of 3344 samples (2606 certified) and reported out 3677 samples.

The laboratory is looking forward to hosting a first-ever regional meeting and training session for State regulatory seed analysts in the southeast presented by USDA at our Tifton facility on 1 May. The workshop will address peanut germination testing in order to promote uniformity across the region. We expect to have about thirty participants, including seed analysts from Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, South Carolina, Virginia and Georgia, as well as participants from USDA, GCIA and the Alabama Crop Improvement Association. In addition to peanuts, we plan to address any other testing or regulatory issues that may be of interest to the States attending.
Total U.S. peanut acreage will be up 29 percent in 2014. Total upland cotton acres will increase 7 percent compared to last year but down in some Southern states. U.S. soybean acres set to set record and higher in Southeast, too, with wheat acres down, according to USDA Prospective Plantings report issued March 31.

According to the report, Georgia peanut farmers say they plan to plant 660,000 acres, or 53 percent more than in 2013, which was a low-water mark for peanut acres in that state in recent history. Alabama farmers plan to plant 165,000 acres, or 18 percent more than last year. Florida plans 150,000 acres, up 7 percent. South Carolina growers look to plant 95,000 acres, up 17 percent. Total U.S. acreage is predicted to be 1.38 million acres, or 29 percent more than in 2013, but still much less than the 1.63 million acres planted in 2012.

All cotton planted area for 2014 is expected to total 11.1 million acres, 7 percent above last year. Upland area is expected to total 10.9 million acres, up 7 percent from 2013.

Southern 2014 cotton acres compared to 2013:
- Alabama - 340,000 acres (down 7 percent)
- Georgia 1.35 million acres (about even with last year)
- North Carolina 470,000 acres (up 1 percent)
- South Carolina 250,000 acres (down 3 percent)
- Tennessee 280,000 acres (up 12 percent)
- Texas 6.4 million (up 10 percent)

Planted soybean acres, if realized, will set a record at 81.5 million acres, up 6 percent from last year. Compared with last year, planted acreage intentions are up or unchanged across all states with the exception of Missouri and Oklahoma.

Southern soybean 2014 acres compared to 2013:
- Alabama – 500,000 (up 15 percent)
- Georgia – 240,000 (up 4 percent)
- Kentucky – 1.7 million (up 3 percent)
- North Carolina – 1.6 million (up 10 percent)
- Tennessee – 1.6 million (up 3 percent)

All wheat planted area for 2014 is estimated at 55.8 million acres, down 1 percent from 2013. The 2014 winter wheat planted area, at 42.0 million acres, is down 3 percent from last year but up slightly from the previous estimate. Southern wheat acres down across the board.

Southern wheat 2014 acres compared to 2013:
- Alabama – 230,000 (down 23 percent)
- Georgia – 280,000 (down 33 percent)
- Kentucky – 620,000 (down 11 percent)
- North Carolina – 830,000 (down 16 percent)
- South Carolina 230,000 (down 15 percent)
- Tennessee – 560,000 (down 8 percent)
2014 Legislative Session Recap (courtesy of GAC)

http://www.ga-agribusiness.org

WATER POLICY

The state’s water policy has a significant impact on economic viability and environmental stewardship. Senate Bill 213, the Flint River Drought Protection Act revision, was introduced last session as a way to protect agricultural water users and ecologic habitats in the lower Flint basin during times of extreme drought. The legislation puts in law the authority of the EPD Director to augment stream flows to minimum volumes in order to sustain vulnerable habitats and wildlife. It also requires agricultural irrigation efficiencies to be reached by the year 2020 for all regional Ag permit holders. We are very pleased with the passage of this bill that will ultimately keep federal agencies from influencing Georgia water policy in this critical farming area.

AG TAX EXEMPTIONS

The Georgia Ag Tax Exemption (GATE) program has proven to be a tremendous benefit to producers and agribusinesses all over the state since its implementation in 2013. House Bill 983 was introduced to protect actual agricultural producers and tighten the qualifications. Lawmakers continue to keep a close eye on potential abuses, so please only use the GATE exemptions on appropriate items. Compliance is GAC’s sole motivation for the design and distribution of our GATE Guidance document that helps evaluate what is (and is not) sales tax exempt. For more information, visit https://forms.agr.georgia.gov/GATE/.

Events & Deadlines

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<td>GCIA Peanut Seed Short Course, Tifton</td>
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<td>April 21-23</td>
<td>AOSCA Southern Region Conference, College Station, Texas</td>
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<td>April 29</td>
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<td>May 19-20</td>
<td>Institute of Plant Breeding, Genetics &amp; Genomics Retreat, Tifton</td>
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<td>June 2-3</td>
<td>Georgia Integrated Cultivar Release System Turfgrass Forum (contact GSDC for information)</td>
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