



Georgia Crop Improvement Association

2018 Annual Report

I've Been Thinking - Year in Review

- Terry Hollifield, Executive Director

As I prepare this end of the year report, I feel relief that 2018 is over as well as great enthusiasm for the start of 2019. Hurricane Michael dealt a horrible blow to Georgia agriculture and commodity prices have been better, but I know that agriculture will recover and prosper.

In 2018, GCIA saw a significant decrease in total certified seed acreage inspected of about 15% from 2017. Peanuts posted a significant decrease in acres inspected, and as a result, we issued fewer seed certification tags on the crop.

Certified turfgrass acres increased over 500 acres as compared to 2017 production, and we've seen a shift from some older varieties to newer varieties. Our international turfgrass certification program, patterned after our domestic turfgrass certification program, remains very active in 13 countries with 14 university and private varieties certified. Due to financial policies implemented by the board of directors, the association remains financially secure.

I would be remiss if I did not report to you the status of Agricultural Audits, a subsidiary of GCIA. The purpose of Agricultural Audits, LLC is to utilize the inspection/auditing experience of our staff to help promote food safety and organic food production. These programs remain relatively stable. The Organic Certification Program continues to create much interest among growers.

Our staff of experienced employees remains dedicated to our mission of seed and turfgrass certification. We pledge to you that we will always work to be efficient and professional as we conduct our duties.

I can't wrap up this little narrative without saying a few words to those Georgia farmers and agribusinesses decimated by hurricane Michael. Your lives have been changed forever. It will take years, if not decades, for you to fully recover. Disasters like Michael test people's faith. Fortunately, people in the Ag Industry have the faith or they wouldn't be farming. These are the times they draw on their faith to keep going. Plus, the outpouring of help from neighbors renews one's faith in people. The assistance provided by the Federal, State, and County government, as well as all the other agencies and organizations that helped, renews our faith in our democracy. So keep the faith and run into 2019 with a passion to strive.

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MEMBER
Association of Official
Seed Certifying Agencies
<http://www.aosca.org>

Seed Certification Program

Inspection of the growing crop is made by official inspectors under the direction of Billy Skaggs, Certification Program Manager. Certified seed may be defined as seed certified by the Georgia Crop Improvement Association as to origin, adaptation, breeding, seed condition, purity of variety, freedom from disease and noxious weed seed.

Through its certification service, the Georgia Crop Improvement Association makes available the best seed possible for Georgia farmers. Seed certification encourages farmers to purchase seed of approved varieties; it also protects the buyers of crop seed in that only high quality, superior performing seed are approved for certification.

Certified seed grown in Georgia can be readily identified by the official tag or certificate of the Georgia Crop Improvement Association attached to the container of seed. Certified seed standards of the Association meet or exceed the minimum standards approved by the Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies and the Georgia State Seed Law. All certified seed is tested for germination, purity, weed seed and other crop by an approved seed laboratory.

In 2018, GCIA inspected 140,995 acres of cropland & turfgrass - of which approximately 94% were approved. In addition, GCIA printed approximately 2.5 million certified seed tags. As in previous years, GCIA also conducted contract inspections of an additional 2,974 acres.

Commodity:	Inspected Acres:
Peanuts	121,597
Turfgrass	8,503
Small Grains	4,525
Pasture Grasses	1,672
Soybeans (certified & contract)	3,825
Quality Assurance	873
TOTAL	140,995



Turfgrass Certification Program

GCIA’s turfgrass certification program is the only quality control offered for protection of the sod buyer, as state and federal laws do not address vegetatively-produced crops. GCIA turfgrass members produce “blue tag” certified sod which is field inspected at least three times each year by experienced inspectors.

In 2018, GCIA inspected 8,503 acres of turfgrass sod of which 8,019 acres were certified at season’s end. Over the last four years, turfgrass acres have increased 1,277 acres (21% increase). Turfgrass producers issued 21,150 turfgrass certificates in 2018 - the majority of which were created using GCIA’s Electronic Turfgrass Certificate Program (ETC).



GCIA took advantage of several opportunities to promote the certified turfgrass program in 2018, including the 72nd Annual Southeastern Turfgrass Conference, the Golf Industry Show in San Antonio, Texas and the Urban Ag Council’s EDGE Expo.

GCIA also administers the International Turfgrass Genetic Assurance Program (ITGAP). ITGAP is a proven, quality assurance program that monitors production sites worldwide to ensure that turfgrasses are produced under a rigorous set of rules and guidelines. New in 2018, ITGAP formalized an agreement with Lawn Solutions Australia (LSA) designating AusGAP as the exclusive agent for ITGAP in Australia and the surrounding region. LSA now has 41 AusGAP certified farms in Australia.

ITGAP



Approved Seed Conditioning Facilities

All certified seed must be conditioned in a GCIA approved facility. The facilities are inspected annually to determine if equipment is properly installed and maintained to prevent contamination between varieties. Approved plant representatives are knowledgeable in plant operations and record keeping. Representatives must also attend a GCIA supported training session. Many of these plants are available for custom seed cleaning as well. In 2018, GCIA had 40 approved facilities with several conditioning more than one kind of certified seed; see the breakdown below.

Kinds of Certified Seed Conditioned:	Plants
Peanuts	22
Small Grains / Soybeans	17
Grass Seed / Forages	5
Foundation Seed	2



Produce Food Safety Program

The Produce Food Safety Program is an inspection/auditing program conducted by Agricultural Audits in conjunction with the Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association and PrimusLabs to verify that good agricultural practices are followed during production, packing and shipping. In today's marketplace, food safety verification and confidence are critical. Terry Crane serves as the Food Safety Program Manager for GCIA. In 2018, 184 audits were conducted at 79 locations.



Produce Food Safety Program benefits:

- Requires the use of environmentally safe practices
- Requires the use of laboratory tested water
- Requires a safe & healthy environment for workers
- Requires sanitary handling and packing practices
- Promotes the use of food security precautions.

For more information on this program, visit www.georgiacrop.com/food-safety.

2018 Food Safety Audits:	# Performed
Packing House	38
Ranch	91
Harvest Crew	42
Cooling & Cold Storage	3
Storage & Distribution	2
Processing / HACCP	1
Greenhouse	1
GAPP	6
TOTAL	184

Georgia / Florida Soybean Association

GCIA continued to provide administrative services to the Georgia/Florida Soybean Association, including membership, annual meeting coordination and correspondence with the American Soybean Association. On January 30, 2018, GCIA once again coordinated the annual Georgia/Florida Soybean & Small Grain Expo at the Georgia National Fairgrounds in Perry, Georgia. Over 100 growers, researchers, and industry personnel attended, and the program included the following topics: wheat breeding, new soybean varieties, ryegrass control in small grains, outlook for southern commodities, ag policy update, and ultra-late soybean production.



Georgia Soybean Commodity Commission

Since March 2014, GCIA has provided administrative support to the Georgia Soybean Commodity Commission. Services provided to the Commission include:

- Edited and distributed quarterly GA Soybean News to 350+ Georgia soybean growers
- Distributed soybean education and promotional materials to schools and other groups
- Served on UGA soybean variety recommendations committee
- Wrote and submitted articles to Farmers & Consumers Market Bulletin, Farm Bureau News, and Georgia Agribusiness Council re: Commission funded research
- Worked with United Soybean Board compliance auditor and GDA staff re: audit and provided all requested documentation; prepared annual budget
- Distributed call for grant requests; planned & coordinated meeting to review grant proposals; in 2018, over \$266,000 awarded for soybean research & promotional efforts.

Organic Certification

What exactly is organic certification? Organic certification verifies that a farm or handling facility located anywhere in the world complies with the USDA organic regulations and allows the operator to sell, label, and represent their products as organic. The regulations ([7CFR Part 205 National Organic Program Final Rule](#)) describe the specific standards required for an operator to use the word “organic” or the USDA organic seal on food, feed, or fiber products. The USDA National Organic Program administers these regulations, with input from its citizen advisory board and the public.



While the USDA administers the National Organic Program (NOP), they do not routinely conduct the onsite inspections of these facilities. Instead, USDA NOP relies on agencies and organizations to conduct organic inspections. The Georgia Crop Improvement Association is a USDA NOP Accredited Certifying Agent (ACA). Once approved, organic certifiers are accredited for five years. To ensure compliance, every two and a half years USDA conducts an onsite assessment. Renewing ACA’s will have onsite assessments prior to renewal around the five year mark. These assessments are performed by the NOP.

GCIA was among the first crop improvement organizations in the country to become an organic certifier back in the early 2000’s. Our Organic Certification Program is committed to environmentally sound and economically viable food production. Additionally, the program encourages the preservation of natural resources, the improvement of soil quality through organic, sustainable farming practices and seeks to foster the production of healthy crops, livestock and poultry.

Johnny Luke serves as the Organic Program Manager. In his role, Mr. Luke reviews client applications, makes inspection assignments and conducts many onsite inspections. Jeanne Gonzales is the Organic Program Assistant handling much of the administrative tasks associated with organic certification. Recently, Billie Dunn, Outside Services Program Assistant, has begun assisting with administrative duties for several organic clients. In 2017 and 2018, Sean Cunard and Billy Skaggs received training from the International Organic Inspectors Association and are now authorized to conduct inspections of organic farms as well as processors and handlers.

Many new producers find the organic certification process challenging and often overwhelming. To aid these producers, GCIA developed the Organic Jump Start Program. By participating in Jump Start, a producer can begin the process of learning the organic certification program requirements and documenting production practices that are in compliance with the NOP.

The Jump Start Program will document the use of land and any soil fertility or pest management inputs that may be applied in preparation for meeting the three year land history requirements of the National Organic Program. Upon completion of the required three years without the application of prohibited materials and approval of a current Organic System Plan, the applicant may be approved to produce and market certified organic products.

For more information, visit www.georgiacrop.com/organic.

Clients by scope:	
Crop	45
Processor / Handler	76
Greenhouse	2
Livestock & Poultry	2
Total	125



Georgia Crop

Improvement Association

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