



Georgia Crop Improvement Association

2019 Annual Report

I've Been Thinking - Year in Review

- Terry Hollifield, Executive Director

Per the GCIA by-laws I am required to provide an annual report each year to the membership. Just like farming, some years are better than others. Fortunately, 2019 was one of our better years even though we had a decrease in certified peanut acres. Total acres of all crops inspected for seed certification and contracted field inspections was 131,201 acres. Approximately 95% of all acres inspected were approved for certification. We believe this high approval rate is the result of the numerous seed short courses provided by GCIA and our staff working closely with seed growers, conditioners, and turfgrass producers. Georgia is the leader in peanut seed certification and warm season turfgrass.

We continue to encourage the use of certified seed by attending trade shows, distributing informational brochures and making presentations. In addition, our staff regularly attends UGA Extension Service peanut production meetings and encourages the use of certified peanut seed.

Our International Turfgrass Genetic Assurance Program (ITGAP) continues to grow as production in Australia is finally moving forward. Currently, there are 40 Australian turfgrass production farms enrolled in ITGAP. In addition to the Australian farms, ITGAP has 18 members in 13 countries producing certified grass.

Agricultural Audits, a subsidiary of GCIA, currently provides organic certification and food safety inspections to over 200 clients. These programs, plus auditing services for clients who wish to verify royalty payments, acreage harvested, yields, compliance with contracts, etc., is now a major source of income for GCIA.

I am pleased to report that the association is financially sound and many of our programs continue to grow.

I can't wrap up this annual report without pointing out that there are three things a sound productive organization as ours must have; clients that appreciate the value of seed certification and our other services, a competent staff and active management by its board of directors. We are indeed fortunate to have all three "must haves" working together to make GCIA one of the premier seed certification agencies in the U.S.

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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 2019, GCIA inspected 131,201 acres of cropland & turfgrass - of which approximately 95% were approved. In addition, GCIA printed approximately 2.4 million certified seed tags. As in previous years, GCIA inspected 3,280 acres of soybeans under contract with a private seed company.



Commodity:	Inspected Acres:
Peanuts	112,662
Turfgrass	8,999
Small Grains	2,905
Pasture Grasses	1,477
Soybeans (certified & contract)	4,080
Other (misc, QA, FS)	1,078
TOTAL	131,201



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 2019, GCIA inspected 8,999 acres of turfgrass sod of which 8,035 acres were certified at season's end. Over the last four years, turfgrass acres have increased 1,773 acres (25% increase). Much of this growth can be attributed to the expansion of TifTuf bermudagrass. Producers issued 28,149 turfgrass certificates in 2019 - which is 3,000 more than were issued in 2018.

GCIA took advantage of several opportunities to promote the certified turfgrass program in 2019, including the 73rd Annual Southeastern Turfgrass Conference, the Golf Industry Show in San Diego, California 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. 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 40 AusGAP certified farms in Australia.

In March 2019, GCIA's Billy Skaggs and Bill Carraway of The Turfgrass Group traveled to Australia in support of this new partnership between GCIA's ITGAP and the Australian Turfgrass Genetic Assurance Program (AusGAP). While there, Skaggs and Carraway visited 10 sod farms and provided training to over 100 producers and farm employees with many traveling several hours to attend the on farm training sessions.



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 2019, 141 audits were conducted at approximately 50 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.

2019 Food Safety Audits:	# Performed
Packing House	26
Ranch	71
Harvest Crew	30
Cooling & Cold Storage	8
Processing / HAACP	2
GAPP	4
TOTAL	141

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 15, 2019, 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 2019, over \$200,000 was 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.

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 and Billie Dunn provide administrative support for the program. Sean Cunard and Billy Skaggs received training from the International Organic Inspectors Association and conduct inspections of organic farms as well as processors and handlers.

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

Clients by scope:	
Crop	50
Processor / Handler	82
Greenhouse	2
Livestock & Poultry	2
Total	136

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 2019, GCIA had 39 approved facilities with several conditioning more than one kind of certified seed; see the breakdown below.

Kinds of Certified Seed Conditioned:	Plants
Peanuts	21
Small Grains / Soybeans	17
Grass Seed / Forages	1
Foundation Seed	2





Georgia Crop

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