



Georgia Crop Improvement Association

2020 Annual Report

I've Been Thinking - Year in Review

- Terry Hollifield, Executive Director

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Once again it is time for me to provide the GCIA membership and board of directors with an annual report. Many of you are happy to see 2020 gone and are looking forward to 2021. I agree that 2020 was a difficult year for most aspects of our lives when one thinks about the disruptive pandemic, the lives lost and economic chaos, the unheard of attacks on our constitution, riots in D.C. and across the nation, and the uncertain economic times we are facing. I provide you with this gloomy editorial as a way to get your attention. People tend to prefer the bad rather than the good (weird I know), but if you don't believe that just read a newspaper or watch the local news. Now that I have your attention, here is the good news!

Traditional Seed Certification acres inspected increased by 23,000 acres. Peanut acres reached 135,018 acres compared to 2019 acres of 112,662, wheat increased from a 2019 low of 2,360 to 3,096 acres in 2020. All other commodities saw little growth. Total acreage inspected in 2020 was 153,472 compared to 130,461 for 2019. We issued approximately 3.2 million certification tags, significant when one considers that each tag represents 50 pounds of seed. The certified turf industry had a great 2020 with above average sales and prices. GCIA field inspected over 8,000 acres being grown by 31 clients.

The world wide pandemic significantly impacted our International Turfgrass Genetic Assurance Program (ITGAP). Due to travel restrictions, we were unable to travel and make annual inspections. Fortunately, all growers remained in the program. We are currently certifying 16 varieties in 12 countries with 17 growers. ITGAP has been well received in our newest member country, Australia, and acres plus growers continue to grow. Our Australian agent, AusGAP, is proving to be an excellent partner.

Agricultural Audits, a subsidiary of GCIA, was developed to provide needed inspection and auditing services to agriculture. Food safety, compliance audits, royalty audits, etc. are conducted through Agricultural Audits. Once again we will be, as an agent for the Georgia Department of Agriculture, collecting hemp samples to determine compliance with state and federal laws. We are an approved agency for the USDA National Organic Program. The program is seeing fantastic growth, and we are now serving 175 clients. The program has become a major source of income to GCIA.

GCIA was very fortunate to not be severely impacted by the pandemic. We had a few "scares" but our dedicated staff marched on. GCIA is fortunate to have a board of directors who take an active part in the association, a competent staff that believes in our mission, and a membership that supports us fully. We are, and should be, proud of our association.



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. Becki Hicks provides administrative support for the program, and all field staff assist with field inspections.

In 2020, GCIA inspected 153,472 acres of cropland & turfgrass which is an increase of 20,000 acres over 2019. In addition, GCIA printed over 3 million certified seed tags. As in previous years, GCIA inspected +3,000 acres of soybeans under contract with a private seed company.



Commodity:	Inspected Acres:
Peanuts	135,018
Turfgrass	8,437
Small Grains	4,326
Pasture Grasses	1,148
Soybeans (certified & contract)	3,918
Other (misc, QA, FS)	717
TOTAL	153,472

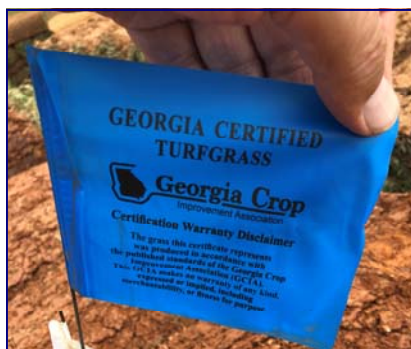


Turfgrass Certification Program

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 2020, GCIA inspected 8,437 acres of turfgrass sod of which just over 8,345 acres were certified at season's end. Over the last five years, turfgrass acres have steadily increased each year. Much of this growth can be attributed to the expansion of TifTuf bermudagrass. Producers issued 37,366 turfgrass certificates in 2020 - which is 9,000 more than were issued in 2019.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting shutdowns, many homeowners cancelled their normal travel plans and stayed home in 2020. Instead of spending those dollars traveling, many Americans instead focused on renovating and upgrading their landscapes - which had a positive impact on sod demand and sales. As a result, sod producers had a banner year in 2020.



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 37 AusGAP certified farms in Australia.

In January of 2020, GCIA's Billy Skaggs traveled to Australia in support of the partnership between GCIA's ITGAP and the Australian Turfgrass Genetic Assurance Program (AusGAP). AusGAP is managed by Mick Sutton. While there, Skaggs and Sutton visited 11 sod farms and met with producers and farm employees. Skaggs reported the LSA growers were committed to producing high quality, genetically pure turfgrasses.



Pictured (L-R): Troy Muscat of Active Turf, Skaggs, Mick Sutton of AusGAP and Charlie Muscat of Active Turf.

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 2020, 169 audits were conducted which is an increase of 20% over 2019.**



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.

2020 Food Safety Audits:	# Performed
Packing House	46
Ranch	71
Harvest Crew	39
Cooling & Cold Storage	6
Processing / HAACP	3
GAPP	4
TOTAL	169

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 8, 2020, 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, outlook for southern ag 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 2020, over \$185,000 was awarded for soybean research, extension & 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 assist Johnny in conducting inspections of organic farms as well as processors and handlers.

Clients by scope:	
Crop	72
Processor / Handler	99
Greenhouse	2
Livestock & Poultry	2
Total	175

GCIA’s organic program continues to grow year over year. **In 2020, we added 39 new clients - an increase of 29%.**

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

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 2020, GCIA had 41 approved facilities with several conditioning more than one kind of certified seed; see the breakdown below.

Kinds of Certified Seed Conditioned:	Plants
Peanuts	23
Small Grains / Soybeans	17
Grass Seed / Forages	2
Foundation Seed	2





Georgia Crop

Improvement Association

2425 South Milledge Avenue
Athens, Georgia 30605

Phone: 706-542-2351
www.georgiacrop.com

OFFICERS

Blake Shepard, Mixon Seed Service
President

Ken Morrow, The Turfgrass Group, Inc.
Past President

Larry Cunningham, R.L. Cunningham & Sons, Inc.
1st Vice President

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DIRECTORS

Bill Bullard, Birdsong Peanuts

Kevin Calhoun, Birdsong Peanuts

Chad Chandler, Olam Peanut Shelling Company, Inc.

Ricky Hartley, Golden Peanut & Tree Nuts

Brian Ogletree, Ogletree Seed, Inc.

Reed Rogers, Golden Peanut & Tree Nuts

Chris Roquemore, Super Sod / Patten Seed

Drew Watkins, Sunbelt Turf Farms

STAFF

Terry Hollifield, Executive Director

Mark Collier, Field & Conditioning Plant Inspector

Terry Crane, Food Safety Program Manager

Sean Cunard, Field & Conditioning Plant Inspector

Billie Dunn, Outside Services Program Assistant

Jeanne Gonzales, Organic Program Assistant

Becki Hicks, Certification Administrative Assistant

Thomas Kessler, Field & Conditioning Plant Inspector

Johnny Luke, Organic Certification Program Manager

Marie Sidwell, Director of Operations

Billy Skaggs, Certification Program Manager