



# Georgia Crop

## Improvement Association

2021 Annual Report

### I've Been Thinking - Year in Review

- Terry Hollifield, Executive Director

It is time for me to provide GCIA members and the board of directors with another annual report. When times are good, I enjoy writing this report, not so much fun during the difficult times. I am happy to report that 2021 was a good year for GCIA. I measure our success by the number of acres in our core business, traditional seed and turfgrass certification, and if we met our budget.

Certified seed acres inspected in 2021 was 150,188, a decrease of approximately 3,500 acres. Turfgrass acres held steady at almost 9,700 and small grains increased to 5,334. Peanut inspections were down by 4,000 acres. A total of 3,033,642 Certification tags were issued to clients. Each tag represents a 50 pound unit of seed. Those numbers are pretty impressive. Georgia is a certified seed supplier to much of the southeast, a fact we are very proud of.

Agricultural Audits, LLC, was authorized by the GCIA Board of Directors as a mechanism to provide needed services (outside of traditional seed certification) to agriculture and agribusiness. Some of the services we provide are: audits for license compliance and royalties, food safety audits, association management, and organic certification. These services not only benefit agriculture in our great state but provide an additional revenue stream for our association. Highlights of these programs are found in this report.

Of special interest is the rapid growth in our organic program, and I publicly want to thank the staff for their handling of this growth. Currently, the organic program has approximately 178 clients in several states. We were among the first agencies approved by the National Organic Program which is managed by the Agricultural Marketing Service of the USDA.

Each year, I point out the three most important elements that an association as ours must have to be and remain successful:

- A dedicated staff that understands the importance of what the association is and does for its clients. A staff that can work with clients and conducts themselves professionally.

- A staff that communicates with management.

- A board of directors that is professional, active and ethical. A board with the vision and ability to establish policies that lead to financial stability and success of each of our programs.

- A supportive client base that believes in our programs and sees the advantages of being part of an active, thriving association. A client base that participates in seed short courses, attends annual membership meetings, and works with our staff.

We are indeed fortunate to have all these parts of the puzzle working together for the benefit of the association.

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

**In 2021, GCIA inspected 150,188 acres of cropland & turfgrass which is down slightly from 2020. In addition, GCIA printed 3,033,642 certified seed tags. As in previous years, peanuts led the way, followed by turfgrass, small grains, soybeans and forage grasses**



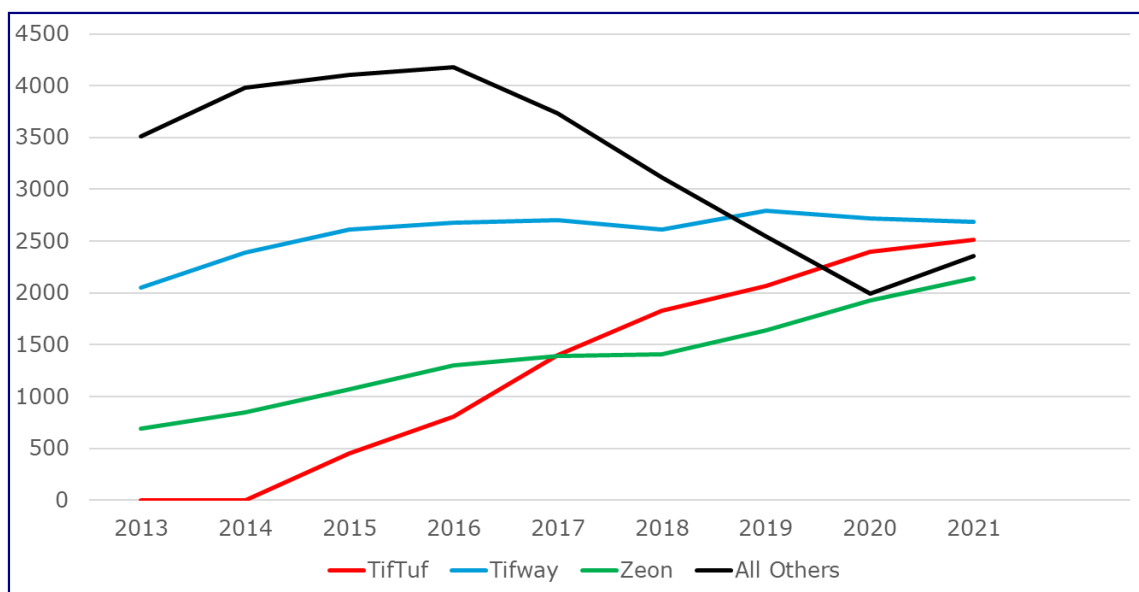
CROP	ACRES
Peanuts	130,000
Turfgrass	9,700
Small Grains	5,334
Forage Grasses	1,136
Soybeans (including Corteva)	4,000
Miscellaneous	18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>150,188</b>



## Turfgrass Certification Program

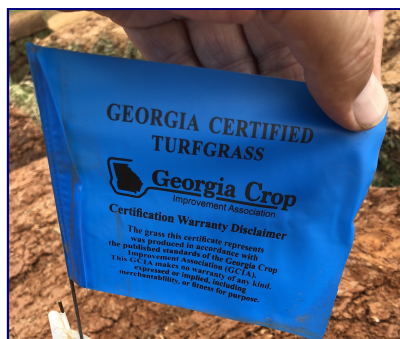
GCIA's turfgrass certification program is the only quality control offered for protection of the sod buyer, as state and federal laws do not address vegetatively-produced crops. GCIA turfgrass members produce "blue tag" certified sod which is field inspected at least three times each year by experienced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

In 2021, certified turfgrass producers applied for almost 9,700 acres of which 8,620 acres were certified at season's end. Since 2013, certified turfgrass acres have increased 55%. Much of this growth can be attributed to the expansion of TifTuf bermudagrass and Zeon zoysiagrass (see table below). Producers issued 39,237 turfgrass certificates in 2021 - which is 2,000 more than were issued 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 with approximately 800 acres in the AusGAP program.

In 2019 and 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. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, GCIA staff were unable to travel to Australia in 2021. That said, Mr. Sutton continued to provide excellent technical and administrative support to the LSA growers. Skaggs plans to travel to Australia again in the spring of 2022 for additional inspections and grower training.



## 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 2021, 180 audits were conducted which is up from 169 in 2020.**



Produce Food Safety Program benefits:

- Requires the use of environmentally safe practices
- Requires the use of laboratory tested water
- Requires a safe 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](http://www.georgiacrop.com/food-safety).

2021 Food Safety Audits:	# Performed
Packing House	39
Ranch	91
Harvest Crew	31
Cooling & Cold Storage	8
Processing / HACCP	5
Indoor Agriculture	1
Storage & Distribution	1
GAPP	4
TOTAL	180

## 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. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Georgia/Florida Soybean & Small Grain Expo at the Georgia National Fairgrounds was cancelled. However, GCIA did represent GA/FL Soybean Association at the Georgia Farm Bureau Convention in December 2021. As an exhibitor at the tradeshow, GCIA staff had the opportunity to meet and connect with soybean producers from around the state.



## 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 2021, over \$125,000 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. Matthew Young serves as the final reviewer of completed inspections. Also, GCIA contracted with an independent inspector, Daniel Tinsley, to assist with inspections in late 2021.

Clients by scope:	
Crop	74
Processor / Handler	99
Greenhouse	2
Livestock & Poultry	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>178</b>

For more information, visit [www.georgiacrop.com/organic](http://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 2021, GCIA had 42 approved facilities with several conditioning more than one kind of certified seed; see the breakdown below.

Kinds of Certified Seed Conditioned:	# Facilities
Peanuts	24
Small Grains / Soybeans	17
Grass Seed / Forages	2
Foundation Seed	2





# Georgia Crop

## Improvement Association

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### **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

Jutt Howard, North Georgia Turf  
2nd Vice President

### **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

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### **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

Leslie Wright, Certification Administrative Assistant