



Georgia Crop Improvement Association

2022 Annual Report

I've Been Thinking - Year in Review

- Terry Hollifield, Executive Director

It is the time of year when those of us who are presidents, executive directors and secretaries, etc. begin the struggle of developing an annual report for our members. Most of us want to be factual but not bore you with a lot of statistics and numbers. I have to admit that even though I tried to find a new and creative way to present this report to you, I failed. As Joe Friday on the TV show *Dragnet* said when he interviewed eye witnesses to a crime, "Just the facts ma'am, just the facts." Only baby boomers will know about *Dragnet*. Here are the facts.

Certified acreage of all crops declined from 150,188 in 2021 to 145,782 in 2022. Peanut acres declined from 129,692 in 2021 to 126,166 in 2022 and small grain acreage declined from 5,334 to 4,051. Turfgrass, soybeans and forage grasses acreage remained stable. Certified tags sales declined from 3,033,642 to 2,615,511 in 2022. Remember that each tag represents a 50 pound unit of certified seed. The majority of the decline in tag sales was due to the decline in peanut acres. Even with the decline in acreage and certified tag sales, GCIA continues to be among the top five seed certification programs in acres inspected.

Fortunately, we were able to meet our budget even with the decline in acres and tag sales while providing the efficient professional services that our clients expect.

Agricultural Audits, LLC was authorized by the GCIA Board of Directors to provide needed services, outside of our core business of seed and turf certification, to agriculture and particularly agribusinesses. We provide audits for license and contract compliance, food safety audits, association management and organic certification. Whereas the organic and food safety program do require additional dedicated staff members, much of the other programs conducted under Agricultural Audits utilizes current staff making for more efficient use of their time.

We continue to have the only international turfgrass certification program. This program, based on domestic turfgrass certification principals, is a proven quality assurance program that monitors production sites worldwide to ensure that turfgrasses are produced under a rigorous set of rules and standards.

I never miss an opportunity to remind everyone why GCIA is a successful association. We are fortunate to have a dedicated efficient staff, an active board of directors and a supportive client base.

Please take a few minutes to review the annual report in detail. I think you will be interested in our accomplishments, and I hope proud to be associated with our programs.

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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 2022, GCIA inspected 145,782 acres of cropland & turfgrass which is down slightly from 2021. In addition, GCIA printed 2,615,511 certified seed tags. As in previous years, peanuts led the way, followed by turfgrass, soybeans, small grains, and forage grasses.



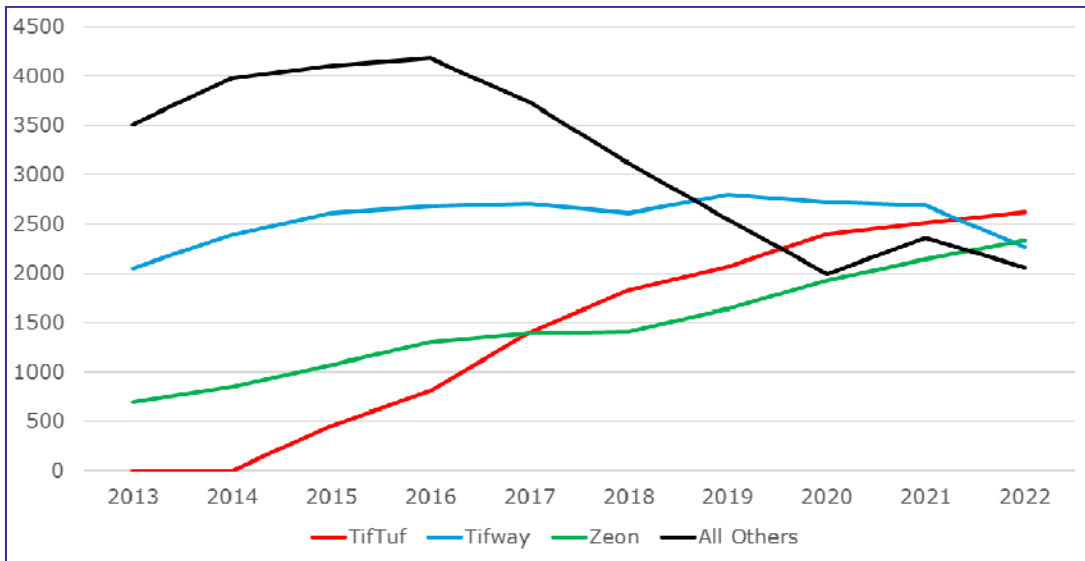
CROP	ACRES
Peanuts	126,166
Turfgrass	9,950
Small Grains	4,051
Forage Grasses	1,115
Soybeans (including Corteva)	4,500
TOTAL	145,782



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 2022, certified turfgrass producers applied for almost 9,950 acres of which 9,020 acres were certified at season’s end. Since 2013, certified turfgrass acres have increased 59%. Much of this growth can be attributed to the expansion of TifTuf bermudagrass and Zeon zoysiagrass (see table below). Producers issued 32,174 turfgrass certificates in 2022 - which is down slightly from 2021.



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.

In 2022, GCIA’s Billy Skaggs traveled to Australia in support of the partnership between GCIA’s ITGAP and the Australian Turfgrass Genetic Assurance Program (AusGAP). Skaggs inspected AusGAP turf production facilities in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, and South Australia taking time to share his experience inspecting certified turf and provided grower training at each location. AusGAP is managed by Mr. Mick Sutton. In September, Sutton visited Georgia and toured several GCIA member farms.



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 2022, 133 audits were conducted which is down slightly from 2021.



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.

2022 Food Safety Audits:	# Performed
Packing House	33
Ranch	56
Harvest Crew	30
Cooling & Cold Storage	5
Processing / HAACP	5
Indoor Agriculture	1
Storage & Distribution	2
GAPP	1
TOTAL	133

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. The Georgia/Florida Soybean & Small Grain Expo was held December 5, 2022 at the Georgia National Fairgrounds. In addition, GCIA represented GA/FL Soybean Association at the Georgia Farm Bureau Convention in December 2022. 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 Georgia soybean growers and industry;
- Distributed soybean education and promotional materials to schools and other groups;
- Served on Southern Soybean Research Program board of directors;
- 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 2022, over \$150,000 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.

Billie Dunn serves as the Organic Program Manager. Johnny Luke is the senior organic inspector and conducts the majority of the onsite inspections. Other available inspectors include Daniel Tinsley, Sean Cunard, and Billy Skaggs. Jeanne Gonzales and Michelle Ramirez are Organic Certification Specialists providing vital administrative support for the program. Matthew Young with Tennessee Crop Improvement assists with final reviews of completed inspections.

Clients by scope:	
Crop	74
Processor / Handler	98
Greenhouse	4
Livestock & Poultry	2
Total	178

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 2022, GCIA had 41 approved facilities with several conditioning more than one kind of certified seed; see the breakdown below.

Kinds of Certified Seed Conditioned:	# Facilities
Peanuts	22
Small Grains / Soybeans	15
Grass Seed / Forages	2
Foundation Seed	2





Georgia Crop Improvement Association

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