



# Georgia Crop Improvement Association



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

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## GCIA News Briefs

SUMMER 2023

### I've Been Thinking

- Terry Hollifield, Executive Director

I have reached that time in life where I do a lot of reflecting on the past. When you become a senior you don't have the energy you once had, so you have more down time to reflect. Lately I find myself thinking about the history of GCIA.

When I came to work the association had four fulltime employees and one part time inspector. I was the maintenance man, janitor, printed all the certification tags and made most of the field and conditioning plant inspections. I had a boss, but I can't remember exactly what he did!

Seed Certification was our only business. Hybrid corn, cotton and small grains composed the majority of our 89,633 certified acres. One private company, Coker Pedigree Seed Company, Hartsville, S.C., was the only private seed company that certified seed in Georgia.

All was well until the 1990's. The seed industry as we knew it was changing, becoming more of a business than an avocation or way of life. The Land Grant Universities were terminating cultivar development programs, reducing the number of public crops and varieties that the mom and pop seed companies could grow and sell. Hometown seed companies were dropping like flies eating DDT (Who remembers DDT ...). Large seed companies were buying up regional seed companies and moving away from seed certification. The future looked bleak.

With the leadership of an active board of directors, GCIA was able to diversify our income stream by providing needed services to Georgia agriculture. We established Agricultural Audits, LLC, and now we provide: association management services, USDA Organic Certification, auditing services for license compliance and royalties. We also have an active food safety program and the only International Turfgrass Certification program available.

GCIA is always looking for new opportunities to serve agriculture. If your business could possibly use any of our offered services or you have a new venture that we can help with, please contact us. Remember, if you aren't growing new branches then the tree is dying. Let us help your tree grow.

## 2023 GCIA Upcoming Ag Events:



Georgia / Alabama Seed Associations Convention-July 24-25 King & Prince Beach & Golf Resort, St. Simons Island-**For more information, contact Billy Skaggs @ [billy.skaggs@georgiacrop.com](mailto:billy.skaggs@georgiacrop.com)!**

APSA Peanut Pre-Harvest Meeting-Aug. 22-23; <https://www.peanutbuyingpoints.org/summer-conference#:~:text=The%20Pre%2DHarvest%20Meeting%2C%20a,on%20Tuesday%20evening%2C%20August%202022.>



NG Turf Pro Day and UAC Networking & Education Dinner-Oct. 6; <https://urbanagcouncil.com/uac-dinner-meetings/#!event/2023/10/5/oct-5-uac-networking-dinner-sponsored-by-ng-turf-exhibitor-registration>



Sunbelt Ag Expo-Oct. 17-19; <https://sunbeltexpo.com/>



Georgia Sod Producers Field Day-Nov. 6-7; <https://urbanagcouncil.com/uac-industry-events/#!event/2023/11/6/nov-6-7-georgia-sod-producers-field-day-exhibitor-sign-up>



## Certified Turfgrass promoted in UAC article

Thanks to Mary Kay Woodworth, Urban Ag Council, and Bryan Tolar, Tolar Capitol Partners, for the article, 'The simple truth of integrity, Turfgrass certification protects more than just grass,' which was recently featured in the summer edition of the UAC Magazine. While we at GCIA certainly work to promote Certified sod, Bryan took a different approach by relying on industry to help tell the story of Certification. It's one thing for us to talk about it, but it's even better when industry attests to the value of Certification. [https://issuu.com/georgiaurbanagcouncil/docs/uacmag\\_summer2023\\_online](https://issuu.com/georgiaurbanagcouncil/docs/uacmag_summer2023_online)



## 2023 AOSCA Annual Meeting Highlights



The annual meeting of the Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies (AOSCA) was held June 4-7 in Bloomington, Minnesota. Terry Hollifield, Executive Director and Billy Skaggs, Certification Program Manager, attended the meeting. Also, Blake Fleeman, Georgia Seed Development Licensing/Marketing Manager, attended representing the foundation seed program.

On Monday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, the annual AOSCA awards banquet was held. Mr. Skaggs received his 10-year service award, and Mr. Hollifield was recognized for 53 years of service to GCIA & AOSCA. Also during the banquet, Mr. Skaggs was sworn in as the AOSCA President. He will serve as President for the next two years which includes attending regional meetings, chairing all board meetings and presiding over the annual meetings in 2024 and 2025.

During the Tuesday, June 6<sup>th</sup> general session, Mr. Hollifield made a presentation to the membership entitled 'Building a Successful Agency'. The presentation was very well received and led to another 20 minutes of questions and discussion.



## USDA/AMS clarifies varietal labeling requirements of the Federal Seed Act to enhance transparency for growers



USDA-AMS release

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) today reiterates its standing policy related to varietal labeling requirements for agricultural and vegetable seed shipped in interstate commerce. AMS's policy is based on requirements of the Federal Seed Act (FSA) (7 U.S.C. 1551-1611), a truth-in-labeling law that regulates the labeling of seed in interstate and foreign commerce. The FSA does not regulate seed that is grown, conditioned, and traded within individual States. This policy statement makes clear that AMS views false advertising and mislabeling of seed varietal names as serious violations of the FSA.

Periodically, AMS receives questions from seed businesses and customers related to varietal labeling requirements. The most common question is whether varietal names are required on vegetable and agricultural seed. For vegetable seed shipped in interstate commerce, the seed must be labeled with kind and variety name. There is no exception to this requirement.

Agricultural seed has three options for labeling: (1) kind name; (2) kind and variety name; or (3) kind name and the words "variety not stated". The "variety not stated" description only applies to 37 agricultural seed kinds (§201.10). The 37 agricultural seed kinds are: Alfalfa; Bahiagrass; Barley; Bean, field; Beet, field; Brome, smooth; Broomcorn; Clover, crimson; Clover, red; Clover, white; Corn, field; Corn, pop; Cotton; Cowpea; Crambe; Fescue, tall; Flax; Lespedeza, striate; Millet, foxtail; Millet, pearl; Oat; Pea, field; Peanut; Radish; Rice; Rye; Safflower; Sorghum; Sorghum-sudangrass; Soybean; Sudangrass; Sunflower; Tobacco; Trefoil, birdsfoot; Triticale; Wheat, common; and Wheat, durum.

The second most common question involves the proper use of Brand names. Brand names may be associated with the name of the kind or variety of seed; however, the Brand must be clearly identified as not being the kind or variety name. For example, ABC123 Brand sweet corn may not be advertised in a way that creates the impression that ABC123 is a kind or variety name. In this example, the word "Brand" after the word "ABC123" is sufficient to distinguish the Brand.

In addition, if seed advertised under a Brand name is a mixture of varieties and if the variety names are not stated in the advertising, a varietal description or a comparison with a named variety cannot be used if it creates the impression that the seed is of a single or known variety. AMS underscores the importance of avoiding representations that may claim or give the impression that seed Brands add diversification for a grower when that representation is false or misleading. AMS invites the reporting of complaints or tips to [farmerfairness.gov](http://farmerfairness.gov) or directly to AMS's Seed Regulatory and Testing Division, contact below.

Kind and variety information is important to farmers purchasing seeds. The Federal Seed Act regulations require seed kind and varietal information to be printed on seed containers, or labels, in a form that is clearly legible. This requirement allows a purchaser of seed to make reasoned and informed decisions. AMS expects farmers to be informed of kind and variety at the earliest opportunity, usually at the time of purchase and no later than the commencement of shipment. This can be accomplished by allowing the grower to physically review the seed container and its label, by making the labeled claims easily accessible to the grower (e.g., a link to an image of the actual label), or through other appropriate means.

AMS is committed to the enforcement of the varietal labeling provisions of the FSA and, through Section 409 of the FSA (7 U.S.C. 1599), the USDA is authorized to initiate administrative proceedings against anyone who violates any FSA provision or regulation. Enforcement outcomes may range from cease-and-desist orders and monetary penalties to seizure of the seed and criminal sanction in the federal court system. Anyone with knowledge of potential violations of the FSA is encouraged to report them to AMS.

Please contact AMS's Seed Regulatory and Testing Division Director, Ernest Allen, at [Ernest.Allen@USDA.gov](mailto:Ernest.Allen@USDA.gov) or (704) 810-8884 for additional information and questions.

## Update on GCIA Field Inspections from Terry Hollifield



As you can imagine the field inspection staff is in full swing completing small grain and Bahia grass inspections and finishing up the first round of turfgrass inspections. Small grain inspections were uneventful but harvest was difficult due to frequent rains. Turfgrass inspections have been problematic. The cold snap the week of Christmas, with below freezing temperatures, resulted in significant grass winter kill on many farms. Above average rainfall and cool night time temperatures slowed turfgrass recovery growth and high demand is forcing producers to hunt every square foot of mature sod to harvest. Now we have one of those El Nino, Pinto, Rio (whatever the name is?) weather phenomenon bringing us even more rain.

We are receiving reports of some peanut fields having “thin” stands. This year peanut seed germinations reported by the laboratories were good to excellent. Unfortunately, the cool nights and wet cooler soils likely contributed to low or slower emergence than desired. Thin stands often lead to issues with TSWV that certainly can reduce yields. Many report that the crop is already two weeks behind due to cool temperatures and cloudy days.



### Five reasons for planting **GEORGIA CERTIFIED SEED** are:

- ◇ They are from adapted varieties of known performance.
- ◇ Never more than two generations from Foundation seed.
- ◇ Field and bin inspected for trueness to variety, inseparable other crop and noxious weed seeds.
- ◇ Conditioned in an Approved Plant.



# Georgia Crop Improvement Association

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## **OFFICERS**

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Past President

Chris Roquemore, Super Sod/Patten Seed  
1st Vice President

Reed Rogers, Golden Peanut & Tree Nuts  
2nd Vice President

## **DIRECTORS**

Bill Bullard, Birdsong Peanuts

Chad Chandler, Olam Peanut Shelling Company, Inc.

Brian Ogletree, Ogletree Seed, Inc.

Albert Rogers, Premium Peanut

Blake Shepard, Mixon Seed Service

Drew Watkins, Sunbelt Turf Farms

## **STAFF**

Terry Hollifield, Executive Director

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Terry Crane, Food Safety Program Manager

Sean Cunard, Field & Conditioning Plant Inspector

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