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Happy New Year! For us at GCIA, 2024 is off to a fast start. Conferences and tradeshow are cranking up with no end in site for a couple of months. The first quarter of the year is always like this for folks working in agriculture as most organizations and commodity groups try to get their meetings in during the off season. While enjoyable, this time of year can certainly seem like a blur.

As we start off the new year, it's important to reflect back on what we learned the previous year. For me, it was certainly a productive and eventful year. On top of our typical field inspections and industry meetings, I continued to serve on the Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies (AOSCA) board of directors. One highlight from 2023 was being elected AOSCA president at our annual meeting in Minnesota. I have enjoyed serving on the board and look forward to my term as president.

Another highlight of 2023 was the annual meeting of the Georgia & Alabama Seed Associations at St. Simons in July. This meeting is always a great event filled with fun, good food and fellowship. For me, the best part of the meeting was the awards banquet. At the banquet, I had the opportunity to honor my boss, Mr. Terry Hollifield, with the association's Hall of Fame award. He says he was genuinely surprised which made it even better.

A little later in the year, August 14 to be exact, the GCIA board of directors named me as the association's next executive director effective January 1, 2024. I'm excited to serve in this role and look forward to doing so for many years to come. Thanks to our board for placing their trust in me. I will do my very best to serve our members and staff, and I am grateful for this opportunity.

I would be remiss if I didn't take time to thank the person who made this possible, Terry Hollifield. During his 53-year career, Terry developed a reputation as an innovator, starting multiple programs and initiatives at Georgia Crop. Examples include the International Turfgrass Genetic Assurance Program, the organic certification program, food safety services, turfgrass certification, Quality Assurance and Identity Preserved programs. He even got us involved in hemp for a few years. We certainly met some interesting characters when we were out collecting hemp samples!

As a result of his efforts, Terry has had the opportunity to serve the larger agriculture industry in areas outside of the seed arena. He's served on the boards of the Georgia Sod Producers Association, the Georgia Agribusiness Council, the Georgia/Florida Soybean Association, and as AOSCA president.

Terry Hollifield gave me an opportunity when I needed it most, and I will always be grateful for that. Ten plus years ago when I went to work at Georgia Crop, Terry was my boss. Today, I consider him a mentor and friend. Thanks Terry.

Billy Skaggs, Executive Director



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2023 GCIA Upcoming Ag Events:

GCIA Annual Meeting

The 79th GCIA Annual Membership Meeting is set for March 21, 2024 at The University of Georgia Center for Continuing Education (1197 S Lumpkin St, Athens, GA 30602). Formal details to be provided soon!



2024 GCIA Peanut Seed Short Course

The Georgia Crop Improvement Association invites you to attend the 62nd Annual Peanut Seed Short Course on Tuesday, February 13th at the ABAC Georgia Museum of Agriculture. Registration will begin at 8:30 a.m. Refreshments will be provided at registration and the meeting will adjourn at 12:45 p.m. (lunch will not be served).

We encourage you to attend this meeting as we strive to continue improving our overall peanut program. We have a great lineup of speakers planned including Dr. Scott Monfort, UGA College of Agriculture & Environmental Sciences; Tyron Spearman, National Peanut Points Assoc.; Dr. Tim Brenneman, UGA Professor-Peanut Disease Management, Don Koehler, Georgia Peanut Commission; Dr. Jack Davis, JLA Global; and Dr. Carrie Crabtree, Laboratory Division Director-Georgia Dept. of Agriculture.

GCIA approved plant representatives and buying point representatives are required to attend a seed short course once every two years for the conditioning facility or buying point to remain on the GCIA approved list. Please confirm your registration by email (becki.hicks@georgiacrop.com or leslie.wright@georgiacrop.com) or phone (706)542-2351 before Wednesday, February 7th.

2024 Upcoming Ag Events:

- Georgia Ag Forecast–January 26
<https://agecon.uga.edu/calendar/event/2396/georgia-ag-forecast.html>



- Alabama Crop Improvement Association/Southern Seed Certification Association joint membership meeting– February 25-26
<https://southernseedcertification.org/> * Call 334-693-3988 for more info!



- American Peanut Shellers Association Spring Meeting– March 19-20
<http://www.peanut-shellers.org/event-info.aspx?eid=44>



Billy Skaggs Named Executive Director of Georgia Crop Improvement Association



Athens, GA (December 29, 2023) - Georgia Crop Improvement Association announced that Billy Skaggs has been named the new executive director of the organization.

An experienced leader, Skaggs will succeed Terry Hollifield and assume responsibilities on January 1, 2024.

Skaggs has served as the association's certification program manager since 2013. In this role, Skaggs oversaw the certification of seed and turfgrass, including field inspections, seed conditioning, program promotion, and all related activities.

He is also an IOIA trained organic inspector and has conducted audits of USDA certified organic farms and facilities.

In addition, Skaggs also serves as executive secretary for the Georgia Soybean Commodity Commission and the Georgia Seed Association.

During his time at Georgia Crop, Skaggs has overseen the launch of two websites, guided the association's transition to a web-based turfgrass inspection app, provided training for inspectors and members, and gained considerable experience while working alongside Hollifield.

Skaggs' previous experience includes 13 years with UGA Cooperative Extension and two years at the Georgia Department of Agriculture. Skaggs has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture and a Master Degree in Agricultural Leadership, both from the UGA College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences. He is a 2003 graduate of the Georgia Agri-Leaders Forum and was selected to the inaugural class of the UGA Alumni Association's 40 Under 40 in 2011.

Source: [Seed Today](#)

USDA AMS Clarifies Varietal Labeling Requirements of the Federal Seed Act to Enhance Transparency for Growers

Date: March 06, 2023

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 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 or (704) 810-8884 for additional information and questions.

To learn more, please visit the USDA website: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/>



Source: [USDA](https://www.ams.usda.gov/)

Mick Sutton, AusGAP program manager visits Georgia



In December 2023, Mick Sutton, AusGAP program manager, stopped in for a few days while he was here in the U.S. on holiday. While here, Billy Skaggs with assistance from Dr. Clint Waltz, UGA Turfgrass Extension Specialist, and Dr. Brian Schwartz, UGA Turfgrass Breeder, arranged for Sutton to tour some iconic turfgrass locales. On December 13, Sutton, Skaggs and Don Roberts, ITGAP program manager, toured Reynolds Plantation golf course where they learned about a renovation project underway at the club. On December 14, they toured UGA's Sanford Stadium and Foley Field. Following lunch, Sutton enjoyed lunch with representatives from GCIA, ITGAP, Georgia Seed Development and The Turfgrass Group. Sutton & Skaggs provided an overview of the ITGAP / AusGAP partnership following lunch.





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