

## **THE GEORGIA CROP IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION, INC. NOXIOUS WEED FREE FORAGE AND MULCH - QUALITY ASSURANCE PROGRAM**

The Georgia Crop Improvement Association, through our Quality Assurance third party inspection service, offers a program designed to offer some assurance that forage and mulch sold with the proper certification meets minimum standards designed to limit the spread of noxious weeds.

### **GENERAL STANDARDS, APPLICATION DUE DATES, FEES, ETC.**

#### Application Due Date:

- Application must be received no less than four weeks before harvest.

#### Applicant Special Instructions:

- Prepare fields for inspection prior to arrival of inspector. Hand rogue, mow or isolate any known noxious weeds. If a field is to be divided for certification a 10 ft wide isolation/buffer strip must be established by mowing or tilling ground.
- All fields must be inspected prior to harvest. Notify GCIA if your fields are within 7 days of harvest and you do not have an inspection report approving your field(s) and storage site(s).
- Be aware of required records. (please reference section below - *Maintaining Identity of Harvested Forage or Mulch*)
- Ten days prior to sale of certified product; request Quality Assurance labels or bulk certificates.

#### Field Description:

- A field is defined as the area growing one crop, covered by one inspection report and not divided by public roads, natural man made barriers or other crops. A field and the inspection will also include ditch banks, road sides, waterways, fence rows, buffers, field roads, etc.
- If the field producing certified mulch is also a certified seed producing field, both fields must be identified using the same field number or other identifier.
- The entire perimeter of the field will be inspected as well as the interior.

#### Storage Site Inspections:

- A storage site is any location where harvested certified forage or mulch will be stored pending sale.
- The storage site must be free of noxious weed seeds and noxious weeds capable of producing seeds during the time the certified product is stored.
- Product stored at an inspected site that fails the site inspection is not eligible for certification.

#### Inspection(s):

- All fields and storage sites producing certified noxious weed free forage and mulch must be inspected and found to be free of noxious weeds as published on the Georgia Department of Agriculture's Noxious Weed List. Specific weeds and/or grasses and other recognized lists may be added: Federal Noxious Weed List, a specific state's noxious weeds list, etc. All lists must be noted on all documents including any certificates issued. A crop that is harvested before inspection is not eligible for certification.
- If noxious weeds are found on ditch banks, road sides, waterways, fence rows, buffers, field roads, etc. an isolation/buffer strip no less than 10 ft may be established between the crop to be harvested and the area infested with the noxious weeds. A re-inspection is required and the isolation/buffer strip must remain unharvested until after the re-inspection. A re-inspection fee is charged.
- Re-inspections may be conducted after the non-compliance issue is corrected, if an inspector is available.

#### Labeling:

- Certification tags may be issued and attached to each bale of approved product.
- Required tag information:
  - Certified noxious weed free (identify list(s)) by the Georgia Crop Improvement Association's Quality Assurance Program
  - Serial number traceable to producer
  - Bulk Quality Assurance certificates may be used to identify certified product with prior approval from Georgia Crop Improvement

#### Maintaining Identity of Harvested Forage or Mulch: (method of identification must be approved by Georgia Crop Improvement)

- Examples:
  - A unique twine (color)
  - Unique "cover" (haylage)
- The applicant must keep accurate records of the amount of forage or mulch harvested from each field including where the certified product is stored after harvest. Records will include the following:
  - The number and average weight of bales harvested.
  - The exact location of the inspected site where bales are stored (GPS or map or narrative description is acceptable).
  - Date of harvest.
  - Field number(s) and location(s) of the field(s) where the product was produced and harvested. Must be the same field identification as on application.
  - Copies of all certification documents.
  - Current inventory records.

Records must be made available to GCIA upon request.

Fees:

- Membership: \$50.00
- Per acre inspected: \$4.00
- Minimum application fee of \$250.00, excluding membership fee
- Mileage at prevailing IRS rate

Re-inspections of fields or storage areas may be conducted at the rate of \$50.00 per hour, to include driving time, plus mileage at the prevailing IRS rate.

Special inspections may be conducted at the rate of \$50.00 per hour, to include driving time, plus mileage at the prevailing IRS rate.

Definitions:

- Forage - Plant material used for animal feed
- Mulch - Plant material used for erosion control, shade, esthetics, increasing organic matter in the soil, animal bedding, etc.
- Noxious weeds - as identified by the Georgia Department of Agriculture's Noxious Weed List as published.

The various field and storage site inspections that are an integral part of this program minimize the opportunity for the certified hay and forage to contain noxious weed seeds. However, the production and distribution of certified material depends on the integrity of those participating in the program and GCIA makes no warranty of any kind, expressed or implied, including the warranty of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. There are no warranties that extend beyond the description of the face thereof.