

# 2024

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# Annual REPORT



**Georgia Crop**  
Improvement Association

# 2024 GCIA Recap & Review

## -Billy Skaggs, Executive Director

2024 was another good year for Georgia Crop Improvement. As you will see below, certified acreage increased which means more revenue, and as in the past, our team was ready for the challenge. The hard work and dedication of our staff continues to impress me, and I appreciate all they do for our members and clients.

Regarding certified inspected acreage, we had increases in all commodities except forage grasses. GCIA inspected 165,707 acres of cropland & turfgrass - up 19K acres from 2023. As in previous years, peanuts led the way, followed by turfgrass, soybeans, small grains, and forage grasses. GCIA printed 3,190,522 certified seed tags in 2024, but what does that really equate to? Each certified tag represents a 50-pound unit of certified seed. So, 3.1 million certified tags printed is equal to almost 155 million pounds of certified seed produced in Georgia. GCIA is the country's largest certifier of warm season turfgrass and among the top five certification programs in acres inspected. Pretty impressive.

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. Currently, ITGAP has clients in 14 countries around the world, including a network of almost 40 growers in Australia (AusGAP).

In addition to traditional certification, GCIA has several programs which operate under the umbrella of Agricultural Audits, LLC. Agricultural Audits provides services to farms & businesses outside of the scope of our core business (seed & turfgrass). These services include organic certification (under the supervision of USDA AMS), royalty and license compliance audits, food safety audits, and association management.

Please take time to learn more about our programs and people within this annual report. If you have suggestions on how we might improve, let us know. Our goal is to continue to be recognized as one of the premier crop improvement organizations in the country, and we cannot do that without our members.

Again, thanks to our staff for all their efforts, and thanks to our board of directors for their guidance and direction during 2024.

# Seed Certification Program

Timely field inspection of the growing crop is made by GCIA's highly trained inspectors. 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 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.



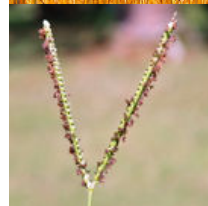
**PEANUTS**  
**145,301 ACRES**



**TURFGRASS**  
**10,071 ACRES**



**SMALL GRAINS**  
**3,635 ACRES**



**FORAGE GRASSES**  
**1,204 ACRES**



**SOYBEANS (including Corteva)**  
**4,633 ACRES**



**OTHER (MISC., QA, FS)**  
**863 ACRES**

In 2024, GCIA inspected 165,707 acres of cropland & turfgrass which is up almost 3,950K acres from 2023. In addition, GCIA printed 3,190,522 certified seed tags. As in previous years, peanuts led the way, followed by turfgrass, soybeans, small grains, and forage grasses.

# Turf 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. Becki Hicks provides administrative support for the program.

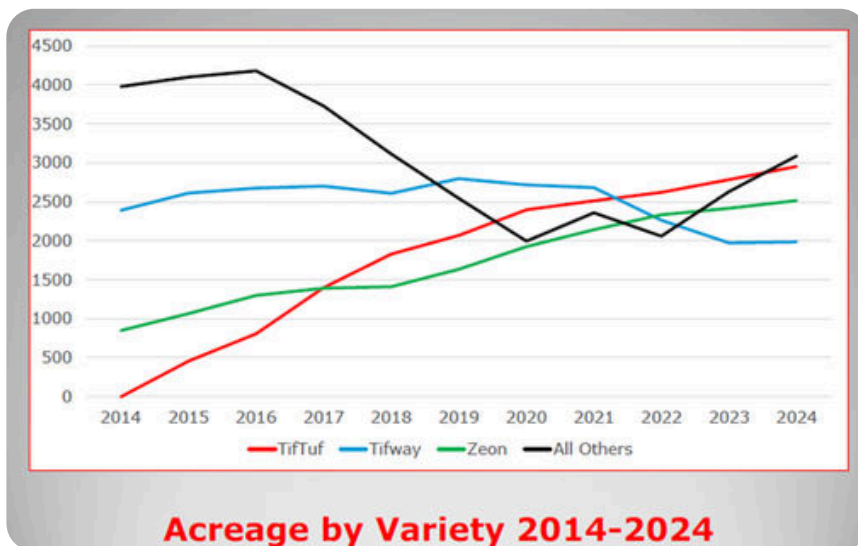
In 2024, certified turfgrass producers applied for almost 10,071 acres of which 9,490 acres were certified at season's end. Since 2013, certified turfgrass acres have increased 68%. Much of this growth can be attributed to the expansion of TifTuf bermudagrass and Zeon zoysiagrass (see table below).



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. ITGAP protects the purity of those grasses against contamination, weeds, and other crops during production.

## ITGAP Benefits

- Experienced professional inspectors monitor production sites worldwide to ensure that turfgrasses are grown under a rigorous set of production standards.
- ITGAP is an internationally accepted and recognized verification program for turfgrass production.
- Golf and sports turf facility owners, architects and designers see ITGAP as a respected source for quality assurance.



# Produce Food Safety Program

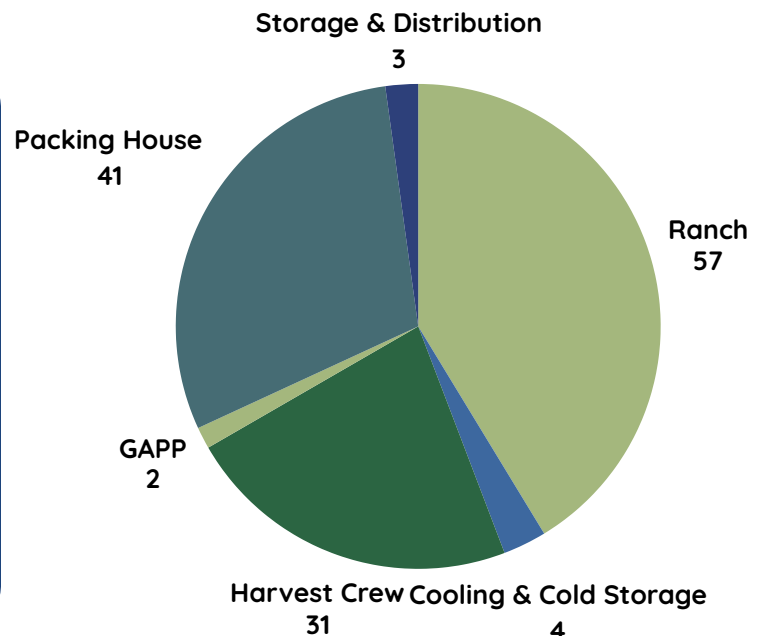
The Produce Food Safety Program is an inspection/auditing program conducted by Agricultural Audits in conjunction with the Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association and PrimusLabs to verify that good agricultural practices are followed during production, packing and shipping. In today's marketplace, food safety verification and confidence are critical. Terry Crane serves as the Food Safety Program Manager for GCIA. In 2024, 138 audits were conducted, an increase over 2023.



## 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).



## 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;
- 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; coordinated review of grant proposals; in 2024, over \$200,000 was awarded for soybean research, extension & promotional efforts - up over \$20k from the the previous year.

# 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. Inspectors include Daniel Tinsley, Bob Westerfield, and Sean Cunard. Jeanne Gonzales is the Organic Certification Specialist, and Reggie Hernandez provides administrative assistance for the program. Matthew Young with Tennessee Crop Improvement conducts final reviews of completed inspections.

For more information, visit [www.georgiacrop.com/organic](http://www.georgiacrop.com/organic).



## Clients by scope:

Crop	36
Processor / Handler	71
Greenhouse	2
Livestock / Poultry	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>



# 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 2024, GCIA had 41 approved facilities with several conditioning more than one kind of certified seed; see the breakdown below.

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





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## Officers

Chris Roquemore, Super Sod/Patten Seed  
President

Jutt Howard, North Georgia Turf  
Past President

Reed Rogers, Golden Peanut & Tree Nuts  
1st Vice President

Bill Bullard, Birdsong Peanuts  
2nd Vice President

## Directors

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

Billy Skaggs, Executive Director

Mark Collier, Field & Conditioning Plant Inspector

Terry Crane, Food Safety Program Manager

Julia Crew, Accounting Specialist

Sean Cunard, Field & Conditioning Plant Inspector

Billie Dunn, Organic Program Manager

Alex Gilreath, Certification Program Associate

Jeanne Gonzales, Organic Certification Specialist

Regina Hernandez, Outside Services Program Assistant

Becki Hicks, Certification Administrative Assistant

Terry Hollifield, Senior Consultant / Inspector

Austin Redmond, Field & Conditioning Plant Inspector

Daniel Tinsley, Organic Inspector & Technical Reviewer

Leslie Wright, Certification Administrative Assistant