



Connecting farmers through environmentally and socially sustainable good agricultural practices.



Membership Continues to Grow

2014 has been a successful year for GAP Connections thanks to the many growers, companies, and stakeholders who support us. There are over 10,500 grower members from 16 states who have registered for a Grower ID. Over 9,500 of these grower members attended a GAP training in 2014 to get information on good agricultural practices in crop, environmental, and labor management. These impressive numbers are a reflection of the dedication of the industry to agricultural practices which produce a quality crop while protecting, sustaining or enhancing the environment with regard to soil, water, air, animal and plant life as well as protecting and ensuring the rights of farm laborers.

On-farm GAP Compliance Audits

In September 2014, the U.S. Tobacco GAP program is taking the next step in assuring the use of Good Agricultural Practices with a pilot program for compliance audits. The audits will be administered through GAP Connections and conducted by a neutral third party auditor. The audits will give growers a chance to demonstrate their commitment to producing a quality crop while using best management practices to ensure they are protecting the environment and providing a safe workplace for their employees.

All growers selected for the pilot audits will be contacted prior to the audit and will be given a checklist of documents that will be reviewed. Audits are scheduled to start September 17, 2014.

Participation in the audit program benefits you as a grower in many ways:

- Third party audits provide assurances to customers that Good Agricultural Practices are actually being followed in production of the tobacco they are buying. This enhances the value of US tobacco in the eyes of customers and helps the whole US tobacco industry
- Audits benefit the vast majority of growers who want to produce a high quality crop in a sustainable manner by "leveling the playing field". They can help ensure that no one gains short term advantages by using poor, unsustainable practices that harm the US industry and all growers in the end
- Good audit results raise your standing among suppliers and buyers.
- Audits can identify misunderstandings about GAP requirements and provide guidance to correcting problems before they become major concerns
- Audits can reduce your risk for violation of labor or environmental regulations by identifying concerns early and providing guidance in correcting them
- Willingness to be audited demonstrates your commitment to social responsibility and a quality product

Five Questions to Ask Your Farm Labor Contractor

Before hiring anyone to house, recruit, employ, solicit, hire or transport migrant or seasonal agricultural workers for a fee, Richard Blaylock, North Carolina district director for the U.S. Department of Labor (U.S. DOL), says there are five things a grower must have:



Farm Labor Contractor certification card: According to Blaylock, "It's imperative that growers ask for that certification card! Right at the top, it says exactly what the Farm Labor Contractor (FLC) is authorized to do. If it states they are just furnishing workers, then that farm labor crew leader should not be providing housing or transportation."

A copy of the FLC's insurance, license and health examination: "If a farm labor crew leader is transporting workers, the certification card will include the make, model, serial number and year of the vehicle they are transporting in." If your FLC is authorized to transport, Blaylock says growers must request:

- A copy of their vehicle insurance – FLCs must have \$100,000 insurance for each seat in their vehicle. Blaylock encourages growers to "inform the insurance agent that you have hired the FLC and require the agent to contact you immediately if they get notice to cancel the insurance."
- A copy of the driver's license – "Make sure it is current and valid," says Blaylock. "If the FLC is not authorized to drive, ask for the FLC certification card for the contracting employee in his crew who is authorized to drive. That person should also be listed on the insurance policy. Workers can use their native license if it is current and valid for the vehicle being driven."
- A copy of the driver's health examination – "Those who transport people are required by law to have a basic health exam every two years."

A copy of the pre-occupancy inspection and housing disclosure forms: If an FLC is authorized to provide housing, their certification card will include the housing location, the construction type, the number of units and the housing owner. Growers should ask for a copy of the pre-occupancy inspection and the housing terms and conditions that were provided to workers.

A copy of the employment disclosure forms: FLCs must inform migrant and seasonal agricultural workers in writing about the terms of prospective employment, including the place of employment, work to be performed, if transportation and/or housing is provided, any cost for housing or transportation, wages to be paid, the period of employment and whether state workers' compensation or state unemployment insurance will be provided.

A copy of the wage statements: FLCs must provide migrant and seasonal agricultural workers a full and complete wage statement each week and provide a copy to the grower. The wage statement must include the employee name, social security number, permanent address, work period for each day (including the starting and quitting time), hours worked, rate of pay, daily and weekly pay, all itemized deductions, net pay, employer name, address and Employer Identification Number. Blaylock recommends that growers perform the time keeping and payroll functions and pay workers directly.

Why it matters

By asking these questions, you help ensure that workers on your farm are safe and treated fairly and you avoid payment of back wages and fines. In addition, says Blaylock, "Employees who are treated well are more productive, produce a higher-quality product and are more likely to return year after year."

For answers to general questions about employment laws, workplace issues or other topics, please call the U.S. DOL National Contact Center at 1-866-4-USA-DOL(1-866-487-2356) or if you wish to correspond with the U.S. DOL by email, please visit <http://webapps.dol.gov/contactus>.

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A word from our Associate Members

The Council for Burley Tobacco (CBT)



The Council for Burley Tobacco (CBT) is a grower led organization focused on providing a voice for the burley tobacco grower in all segments of the industry at the local, state, national, and international level.

CBT has always worked to represent the interests of the burley industry but last year the 40 year old organization took a new direction by changing the membership requirement, so that the organization is made up of only burley tobacco growers. In its first year as a grower representative organization, the CBT launched a research and education grant program utilizing the tobacco check-off funds; a website and Facebook page to share information with members; and was successful in changing the two-out-of-three rule that handicapped small and large growers by limiting the amount of ground available to them for tobacco production.

Child Labor in Tobacco

The CBT supports the family farm, but they do not support the practice of having children work in dangerous jobs on the farm. The recent report from Human Rights Watch has brought the issue of child labor in tobacco around the world to the forefront. The CBT believes burley farmers in the United States understand the dangers burley production jobs pose to children, and the incidence of children working in tobacco production is low in this country. As a grower member organization, it is critical for the CBT to speak out on this issue. In July, the CBT passed a resolution stating, "We do not condone the hiring of anyone under the age of 16 for work in tobacco anywhere in the world."

To read about the research and education grants from the Council for Burley Tobacco click [here](#).

Lancaster County Conservation District



Four Core Conservation

Soil and water are the two most valuable resources on any farm. Keeping soil and water on our farms will make our farms more productive for years to come. A Conservation Plan identifies practices that will help protect those resources. Working with a professional planner is an excellent way to discover the practices which can best help meet the goals you have for your farm.

There are four conservation practices that when used individually can increase production, decrease fuel use, and protect your farm's resources. The "Four Core Conservation" practices are implementing a nutrient management plan, planting cover crops, planting no-till, and establishing streamside buffers. [Read more about the "Four Core Conservation Practices" here.](#)



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