



CLAP

CONNECTIONS

— 2018 Annual Report —



GAP Connections (GAPC) was established in 2013 as a nonprofit agricultural membership organization to work with growers and stakeholders to raise standards in the tobacco industry through **good agricultural practices** focused on three main management areas: Crop, Environmental and Labor Management. GAPC provides leadership for the adoption of agricultural standards and practices that produce a quality crop while protecting, sustaining or enhancing the environment, ensures the safety and rights of farm laborers and recognizes those producers who are committed to a higher standard.

GAPC believes every decision matters from how you grow to how you work.

Membership and Governance

GAPC has 15 companies and more than 13,000 grower members across 22 states.

GAPC is governed by a Board of Directors that consists of companies, growers and grower associations. There are also several working Committees consisting of growers and stakeholders that advise GAPC on services, policies and programs.

Training

One of the largest endeavors by GAPC is in the education and training of grower members. GAPC, in partnership with several cooperative extension programs, coordinates annual training meetings where growers learn from experts about the latest crop, environmental and labor best management practices. Presenters include specialists in crop and environmental topics such as university agronomists, entomologists, plant pathologists and specialists in

labor topics, including representatives from the federal Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division and certain state departments of labor.

Between 2014 and 2018, GAPC has coordinated more than 590 training meetings in 11 states with average attendance each year between 7,000 and 8,000 growers.

Through training, GAPC helps growers understand and maintain compliance with critical labor laws and regulations. It is important to growers to have labor management practices that adhere to laws and regulations, promote worker rights and provide a safe working environment. Growers not only receive vital information from presenters, but also have an opportunity to interact and ask questions, creating relationships that will help them now and in the future.

Verification

GAPC has conducted more than 4,000 on-farm visits and more than 6,600 worker interviews to assess and verify adoption and compliance.

Beyond the development of standards and the education of growers, GAPC also provides verification of practices at the farm level through farm visits and worker interviews.

Beginning in 2014, GAPC began conducting assessments on behalf of member companies that elected to assess their growers' compliance with the GAPC standards. The assessments include the following verification methods:

1. Grower interviews
2. Document review
3. Visual inspection or observation
4. Worker interviews

If growers contract with multiple companies, they can go through one assessment with GAPC and results will be shared with each company. This creates efficiency and ease for growers and companies.

Certification

The GAPC Certification Program that was launched in 2018 is a three-year program that has annual requirements such as training and self-assessments along with an annual compliance visit.

The **Year 1** compliance visit is a full Certification Audit that includes worker interviews of at least 20 percent of the total workforce. The **Year 2** compliance visit is a Certification Site Visit that focuses on the Critical Standards. The **Year 3** compliance visit is a Certification Desktop Review that focuses on the Critical Standards with documentation. Throughout the three years, growers must achieve and maintain 100 percent compliance with Critical Standards.

Growers who choose to become GAPC Certified demonstrate that they care about both producing a quality crop with industry best practices and creating a safe and compliant working environment for everyone on the farm. It is important for buying companies to know their suppliers, and by choosing to do business with a GAPC Certified Grower, they are receiving greater assurances that good agricultural practices are being used, workers have avenues to report concerns and a safe working environment is being promoted.

GAPC certified more than 470 operations representing more than 800 individual growers in its inaugural year of the program.

Worker Concern Helpline

The GAPC Certification Program also includes adopting a worker concern process and participating in the GAPC Worker Concern Helpline. The GAPC Worker Concern Helpline, administered by The Cahn Group, offers workers a phone number they can call or text to share any concerns they may have about their working environment with operators



who speak both English and Spanish. The GAPC Worker Concern Helpline was piloted with only those growers going through an assessment in 2016 and 2017, but was expanded to the entire grower membership in 2018.

HR and Legal Helpline

GAPC also offers a helpline to growers in partnership with Littler Mendelson, the nation's leading employment and labor law firm, to provide a comprehensive risk management helpline service. Through the helpline, GAPC Grower Members have the opportunity to obtain guidance from an experienced employment attorney on questions regarding HR or employment law, such as handling a termination, discipline or a harassment issue.

Farm Safety Events

One of the most unique training offerings from GAPC is the Farm Safety and Compliance Training events held each year during the early summer months when workers begin to arrive on most of the farms. These events are organized to help growers provide their workers training and resources on important safety, health and regulatory topics. Training is provided by content experts in English and Spanish covering topics such as: field sanitation, heat illness, housing and transportation, pesticide safety, farm equipment safety, first aid, CPR, Affordable Health Care Act, sexual harassment and other regulatory and safety topics. The presenters come from a variety of partners such as federal and state government agencies,



local organizations, medical providers and cooperative extension. In 2018, GAPC had presenters from over 15 organizations including the U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, migrant health clinics, local fire departments and first responders, Project NO Rest, Telamon Corporation, Kentucky Commission of Human Rights and North Carolina Farmworker's Project.

As of 2018, GAPC has held 24 Farm Safety and Compliance Events on farms and receiving stations with more than 5,011 attendees.

The Farm Safety and Compliance Events are free to those who attend thanks to our generous sponsors. Sponsors include RJ Reynolds, Altria, Alliance One International, Philip Morris International, Universal Leaf, Gallatin Redrying & Storage Company, Tobacco Growers Association of North Carolina, U.S. Tobacco Cooperative, Hail & Cotton, Georgia Farm Bureau, ProSolutions, South Carolina Farm Bureau, Virginia Farm Bureau and United Tobacco Company.

These events have a huge impact on all the attendees as the interactive training allows attendees to listen, demonstrate and ask questions about the information and skills they are learning. It also allows growers and workers to interact with many resource providers that can help them in managing labor or help their workers find needed services.

Other Resources

GAPC also provides resources to help growers achieve and maintain compliance such as tailgate kits, safety DVDs, training guides, posters, record templates and other training materials. Growers can pick up many of these resources free of charge at annual GAP trainings or by visiting the GAPC shop and purchasing them online or over the phone.