
Annual Report for 2024





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FROM THE DIRECTOR

In 2024, 162,093 acres of tobacco were grown by GAPC Certified Tobacco Growers. The U.S. tobacco industry has made great strides toward becoming one of the most mature agricultural supply chains. This progress is driven by collaboration, transparency, and a shared commitment to compliance. GAPC, growers, regulators, and organizations focused on environmental and labor issues work together to refine practices and tackle challenges. This collective effort ensures meaningful change while balancing diverse interests, and GAPC is proud to play a vital role.

Our successes are thanks to our staff, board, advisory committees, stakeholders, and the thousands of growers and farmworkers who adapt to the evolving agricultural landscape. We appreciate the growers who continually strive for higher standards on their farms. We recognize that this dedication requires significant effort and resources. In return, GAPC hopes Certification provides tangible value, demonstrating that buying from a GAPC Certified Grower means supporting a grower who follows best agronomic practices, prioritizes environmental stewardship, efficiently uses water, protects soil health and habitats, reduces agrochemical use, and respects workers' rights.

We look forward to continuing to serve the agricultural community in 2025.

Jane Chadwell
President and Executive Director

GAP Connections is a nonprofit agricultural membership organization that provides leadership for the adoption of agricultural standards and practices which produce a quality crop while protecting, sustaining, or enhancing the environment, ensure the safety and rights of farm laborers, and recognize those producers who are committed to a higher standard.





AT A GLANCE

Non-profit:

501 C 3

Date of Incorporation:

August 2013

Location:

Knoxville, TN

Staff:

- Jane Chadwell, Executive Director
- Amy Rochkes, Training & Resource Coordinator
- Lauren Walker, Certification & Assessment Director
- Katelyn White, Business Manager and Certification Coordinator
- Francisca Rios, Farmworker Training Content Coordinator
- Veronica Rosales, Farmworker Trainer
- Alondra Sanchez, Farmworker Trainer

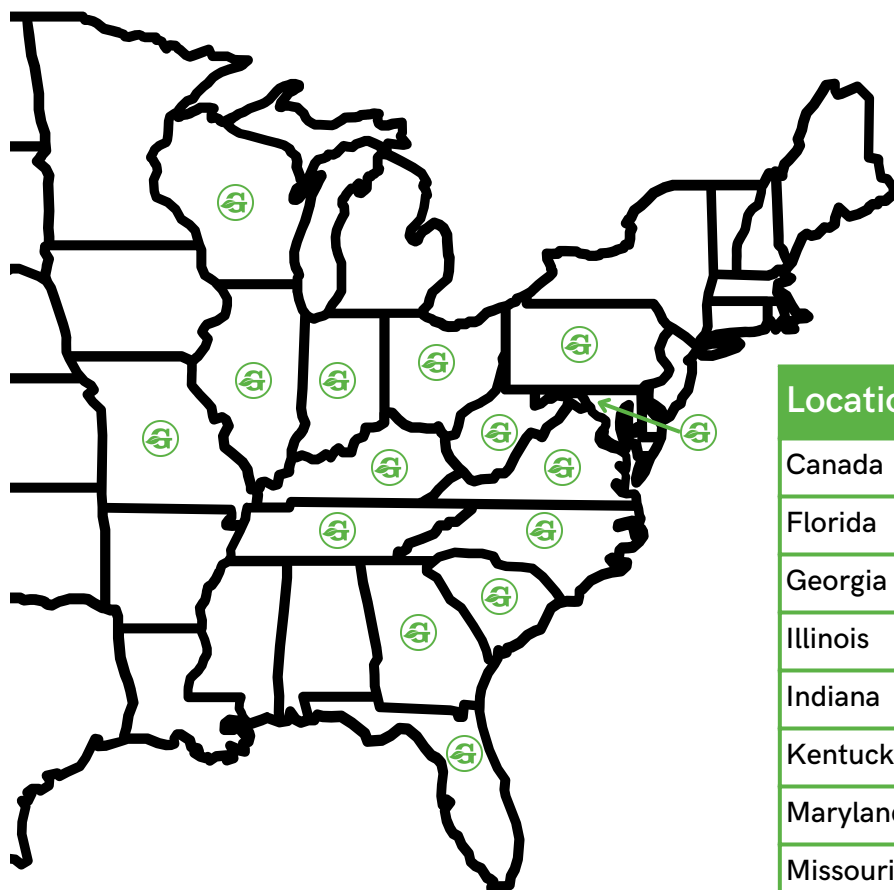


The **GAPC Board of Directors** and administration is counseled and informed by several advisory and working committees. These committees provide input on GAPC policies and procedures affecting growers, workers, and other important stakeholders and suggest ways in which GAPC can better assist in fulfilling its mission. A full list of working committees can be found on GAPC's website.

Board of Directors:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| • Lily Bland, Pyxus Agriculture USA, LLC | • Nathan Musser, Dark Tobacco Grower |
| • Christian Clifton, United Tobacco Company | • Robbie Parker, U.S. Tobacco Cooperative (Chairman) |
| • Jake Dunevant, JTI | • Al Pedigo, Council for Burley Tobacco (Vice Chairman) |
| • Frank Geovannello, Altria | • Jennie Salyer, Gallatin Redrying & Storage |
| • Abbi Graves, Hail and Cotton | • Yutai Stanley Tang, China Tobacco International (North America) |
| • Randy Henderson, Swisher International | • Eric Walker, Burley Stabilization Cooperative |
| • Madison Hilton, R.J. Reynolds | • Tim Yarbrough, Tobacco Growers Association of North Carolina |
| • Brent Leggett, Flue Tobacco Grower | |
| • Hunter Mason, Universal Leaf | |
| • Donald Mitchell, Burley Tobacco Grower | |

GROWER MEMBERSHIP



Location	Count
Canada	1
Florida	13
Georgia	87
Illinois	9
Indiana	37
Kentucky	1,855
Maryland	3
Missouri	6
North Carolina	1,277
Ohio	47
Pennsylvania	253
South Carolina	130
Tennessee	542
Virginia	287
West Virginia	1
Wisconsin	20
TOTAL	4,568

4,568 Active Grower Members

3,252 Farming Operations



AT A GLANCE

75

New Grower
Members in 2024

1.4 Grower Members
per Farm



Average Age of
Grower Member:
52.4

Average Age of a
New Grower Member:
33.4



Enterprises on GAPC Grower Member Operations:

Alfalfa
Hay/pasture
Corn
Wheat
Soybeans
Sorghum
Cotton
Peanuts
Sweet Potatoes
Watermelon
Rye
Cucumbers
Rapeseed
Other
Strawberries
Speltz
Produce
Pumpkins
Other Small Grains
Oats
Hemp
Sweet Corn
Triticale
Tobacco
Nursery Plants
Sage
Canola
Kenaf
Sod
Barley
Popcorn
Logging/Timber
Blueberries
Millet
Bahia Grass
Pecans
Brood Cows
Feeder/Stocker
Cattle
Dairy Cattle
Horses
Turkeys
Ducks
Chickens
Rabbits
Goats
Mules
Guineas
Hogs
Sheep
Geese
Egg/Egg Houses
Donkeys

GROWER TRAINING

Annual GAP Training provides growers the opportunity to learn from content experts on the latest crop, environmental, and labor best management practices and research updates. GAP Connections values our partnerships with the land grant universities, Cooperative Extension Service, U.S. Department of Labor, and state departments of labor and commerce to deliver timely and valuable information.

In 2024, 2,607 growers across 13 states completed Annual GAP Training by attending an in-person training or completing online training through the GAPC Grower System Dashboard.

There were 49 in-person Annual GAP Training events held in partnership with Cooperative Extension Service programs, company meetings, and industry events. The 2024 Training Partners are listed to the right.



Miguel Perez, Drew Long, Brian Pasternak, and Rick Blaylock



- Dr. Daisy Ahumada, North Carolina State University
- Dr. Andy Bailey, University of Kentucky
- Shane Barbour, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Foreign Labor Certification
- Richard Blaylock, U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division
- Lance Butler, TN Department of Labor
- Dr. Grant Ellington, North Carolina State University
- Karen Civils Garnett, U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division
- Jeffrey Graybill, Penn State University
- William Hardee III, Clemson University
- Charles M. Jackson, U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division
- Lisa Kelly, U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Div
- Dr. Ramsey Lewis, North Carolina State University
- William A. Long, NC Department of Commerce
- Kimberly McGahey, U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division
- Dr. J. Michael Moore, University of Georgia
- Brian Pasternak, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Foreign Labor Certification
- Dr. Robert Pearce, University of Kentucky
- Miguel Perez, U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division
- Dr. Arash Rashed, Virginia Tech
- Dr. T. David Reed, Virginia Tech
- Dr. Mitchell Richmond, University of Tennessee
- Katherine Stout, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Foreign Labor Certification
- Dr. Matthew Vann, North Carolina State University
- Theresa Varner, U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service
- Dr. Yuan Zeng, Virginia Tech



TRAINING NUMBERS

State	Total Growers Trained	Attendance at In-Person Meetings	Participation in Online Training
Florida	9	8	1
Georgia	62	60	2
Illinois	3	3	0
Indiana	19	19	0
Kentucky	949	720	229
Missouri	5	0	5
North Carolina	895	734	161
Ohio	19	18	1
Pennsylvania	124	124	0
South Carolina	77	64	13
Tennessee	285	200	85
Virginia	159	150	9
Wisconsin	1	1	0
TOTAL	2,607	2,101	506

Over 500 growers completed Annual GAP Training through the GAPC Grower System Dashboard. Online training provides growers with the convenience of completing training at their pace while still meeting the Annual GAP Training requirements and learning from crop, environmental, and labor content experts. Online training offers growers a variety of course offerings to select from in crop and environmental (28 course offerings), labor (19 course offerings), and GAPC Update and Overview (5 course offerings).

Growers choosing to complete Annual GAP Training online must successfully complete three courses from each of the three categories (crop & environmental, labor, and GAPC update & overview) and successfully complete a knowledge assessment to earn training credit. Online training courses are provided by the Cooperative Extension Service, Labor Compliance Consultants, North Carolina State University Agriculture & Resource Economics, North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services Emergency Program Division, Kentucky Safe – OHSA, and GAP Connections.

New Online Courses in 2024:

- Understanding Illegal Fees
- Understanding OSHA 300 Forms and Reporting Rules
- Understanding and Completing Form I-9's
- Angular Leaf Spot Update
- 2024 Variety Selection Decisions
- Flea Beetle Update
- Greenhouse Management Best Management Practices
- Placement of Tobacco Insecticides at Transplanting
- Placement of Tobacco Fungicides & Fertilizer at Transplanting



Grant Ellington, North Carolina State University

Thanks to the support of GAPC company members, associate members, and corporate sponsors, Annual GAP Training is provided each year at no cost to growers. Annual GAP Training provides a unique opportunity for sponsors to connect and engage with growers who are invested in the tobacco industry and are interested in producing a quality tobacco crop while protecting, sustaining, or enhancing the environment and ensuring the safety and rights of farm laborers.



GOLDLEAF SEED CO.™

LABOR MANAGEMENT WEBINARS



GAPC hosted two labor management webinars in 2024. The focus of the labor management webinars is to provide information and education on labor-related topics that are generally critical or current issues.

In March, GAPC hosted “*Understanding the 2023 H-2A Adverse Effect Wage Rate Final Rule*” with guest speakers Shane Barbour, H-2A Program Director, and Katharine Stout, H-2A Certifying Officer, both from the Office of Foreign Labor Certification Employment and Training Administration U.S. Department of Labor. Barbour and Stout provided a background and overview on the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR), information and overview of the new rule establishing the new methodology for determining the AEWR for non-range occupations, and understanding the Big 6.

In August, GAPC hosted “*Understanding the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR) and How the AEWR is Calculated*” with guest speaker Theresa Varner, Farm Labor Specialist, USDA-NASS Statistics Division, Environmental and Demographics Branch. This webinar focused on the USDA-NASS Farm Labor Program which is the survey and estimation program used by the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration to set the annual AEWR. Varner discussed the background behind the AEWR, the purpose and importance of completing the USDA-NASS Agricultural Farm Labor Survey, and the calculation of the specific USDA-NASS statistics used for the AEWR formula.

“LET’S TALK ABOUT LABOR”

“Let’s Talk About Labor” podcast first launched in the Spring of 2024. The podcast is a collaborative effort between GAP Connections and the University of Tennessee Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics. The goal of the podcast is to help growers connect with other growers and hear about their experiences using various US temporary foreign visa programs to address their labor needs. Nine episodes aired in 2024.



Podcast Episodes include:

- Farmer Experiences with the H-2A Program (April) Guests: George McDonald, Catesa Farms and Bart Gilmer, Falcon Ridge Farm
- H-2A Worker Housing: The Practical Things I Need to Know Before Considering the H-2A Program (May) Guests: George McDonald, Catesa Farms and Bart Gilmer, Falcon Ridge Farm
- H-2 Worker Transportation: Practical Things I need to Know Before Considering the H-2A Program (June) Guests: George McDonald, Catesa Farms and Bart Gilmer, Falcon Ridge Farm
- H-2A Program Housing Requirements (July) Guest: Lance Butler, TN Department of Labor
- H-2A Program Housing Inspections (August) Guest: Lance Butler, TN Department of Labor
- Tobacco and Row Crop Growers’ Experience with the H-2A Program (September) Guests: Jackie Edwards, Corn Silk Farms, LLC, Joey Knight, Knight Farm, and Dalton Armstrong, Armstrong Tobacco Farms
- Tobacco and Row Crop Growers’ Experience with H-2A Worker Housing (October) Guests: Jackie Edwards, Corn Silk Farms, LLC, Joey Knight, Knight Farm, and Dalton Armstrong, Armstrong Tobacco Farms
- Labor Challenges and Strategies to Overcome These Challenges (November) Guest: Terry Hines, Hale & Hines Nursery
- Mechanization as a Strategy to Overcome Labor Challenges (December) Guest: Dana Ensor, Grand Oak Farm and President of Green Earth Connections

FARMWORKER TRAINING

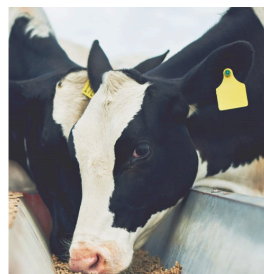


Agriculture ranks among the most hazardous industries in the U.S. GAP Connections recognizes the need to provide tools and resources for growers to build a culture of health and safety in their farming operation.

In 2024, 706 farmworkers were trained in five states through the GAPC Customized Farmworker Training Program.

The Farmworker Training program is an interactive training presented by bilingual and bicultural trainers. The training uses a mixed source of media including power point presentations, videos, hands-on activities, trivia games, and flip charts. The training program includes pre-consultation to assess the need for training and options for specific topics, training documentation for the farm records with a list of training topics covered, workers' name and signature, and date of training, and an individualized training card for each worker completing the training program. GAPC Grower Members earn Farm Safety & Health Training Credits on their Training Report for hosting a customized farmworker training for their workers. In 2024, 80 growers earned this credit.





SAFETY

- Basic CPR & First Aid
- General Farm Safety
- Safe Operation of Farm Equipment
- Pesticide Safety and Worker Protection Standards (WPS)
- Heat Illness Prevention
- Barn Safety
- Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Prevention...and more.

GAPC FARMWORKER TRAINING PROGRAM CATALOG



CUSTOMIZED FOR YOUR OPERATION
HEALTH, SAFETY, COMPLIANCE.

YEAR 2024

GAP

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LABOR

- Housing Orientation for Employer Provided Housing
- Human Trafficking Awareness & Prevention
- Sexual Harassment
- Illegal Recruitment Fees
- GAPC Certification Farm Labor Contractor Records Review
- GAPC Certification Labor Records Review...and more.

CROP INTEGRITY

- Grade separation
- Non-Tobacco and Hemp Related Materials
- Proper Baling and Market Separation

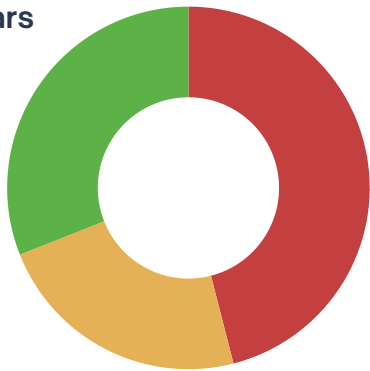
GAPC has a course catalog with an extensive list of topics offered including safety, produce and food handling, labor, and crop integrity that a grower may choose to meet their health and safety training needs. The wide range in topics allows us to work with a variety of industries and sectors of agriculture.



AT A GLANCE

NUMBER OF YEARS WORKED ON FARM

10+ Years
31%



0-5 years
46%

6-10 Years
23%

Farmers utilize the GAPC Customized Farmworker Training to train both new and experienced workers. GAPC Certification requires annual training to ensure that farmworkers keep the information fresh and easily accessible.

WORKERS MAKING CHANGES TO THEIR SAFETY HABITS AS A RESULT OF TRAINING

No Changes
13%



Big Changes
51%

Small Changes
36%

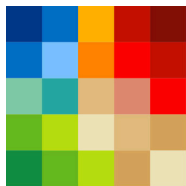
87 percent of the workers who go through the GAPC Customized Farmworker Training state they are making changes to their safety habits due to the training.

State	Number of Trainings	Number of Workers	Number of Farmers
Georgia	1	10	1
Kentucky	8	198	24
North Carolina	15	370	37
Tennessee	1	72	4
Virginia	2	56	14
TOTAL	27	706	80

COST SHARE PROGRAM

For the second consecutive year, GAPC offered a Cost Share Program to members who grow tobacco. This program enabled growers to schedule and host GAPC Customized Farmworker Training on their farms at a 50 percent discounted rate, thanks to sponsorship funds from the tobacco industry. These funds are provided to help more farmers and workers receive critical training in areas such as safety, labor practices, and production techniques.

THANKS TO THESE GENEROUS SPONSORS WHO SUPPORT THIS BENEFICIAL INITIATIVE!



Altria



TOOLS & RESOURCES



**New for
2024**

The materials compiled in the Labor Management Guide are to assist farmers, farm managers, human resource staff, supervisors, and farmworkers in labor-intensive crops understand and comply with the applicable labor laws and regulations, encourage labor best management practices, and improve farm labor practices that shape a worker's experience on the farm.

The information contained in the Labor Management Guide includes best practices, guidelines, checklists, fact sheets, and templates pertaining to being compliant with the Migrant and Seasonal Worker Protection Act, Fair Labor Standards Act, and Rights Under the H-2A Program. The Good Agricultural Practices Labor Management Resources Guide was prepared in 2024 and published on the GAPC website in January 2025.

The Illegal fee training presentation was designed for growers who hire farm workers through the H-2A program. Growers can utilize this presentation to educate farm workers about identifying illegal fees, how to avoid them, and what to do if they encounter such fees on their farm. PowerPoint presentations in English and Spanish were posted to the Member Resources website page, a tailgate training kit and poster is available for purchase through the GAPC Store.



WORKER CONCERN HELPLINE

The GAPC Worker Concern Helpline (Helpline) is designed to provide assistance in English and Spanish to workers and growers on GAPC Member operations. The Helpline was successfully piloted for two years before being expanded in 2018 to the entire GAPC Grower Membership which includes thousands of growers and workers across the eastern United States. The primary objective of the Helpline is to provide a confidential channel for farm workers on GAPC Member farms to ask for information about workplace compliance issues and express concerns or report instances of suspected workplace noncompliance through a fair and trusted process.

Between June 2018 and December 2024, the GAPC Helpline received 79 worker concerns, in addition to concerns raised by workers during GAPC Monitoring Activities.

Of those 79 worker concerns, 72 percent were in scope and resolved, 17 percent did not provide sufficient information or credible evidence, and 11 percent were out of scope and sent to an alternative resource. The number of concerns includes both issues received via phone, text, or email by workers or from a third party on their behalf. Also, a single concern may involve communication with multiple workers on a single farm and/or multiple calls/texts with the same individuals over the time it takes to investigate and/or resolve the issue.



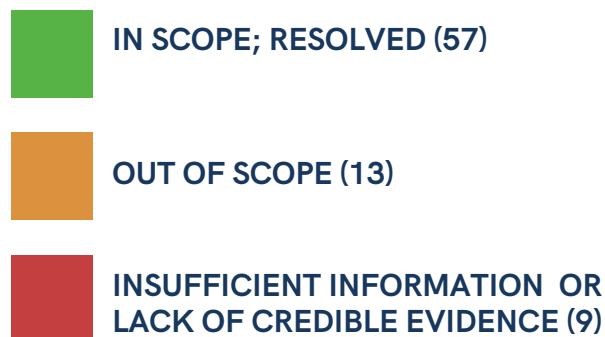


AT A GLANCE

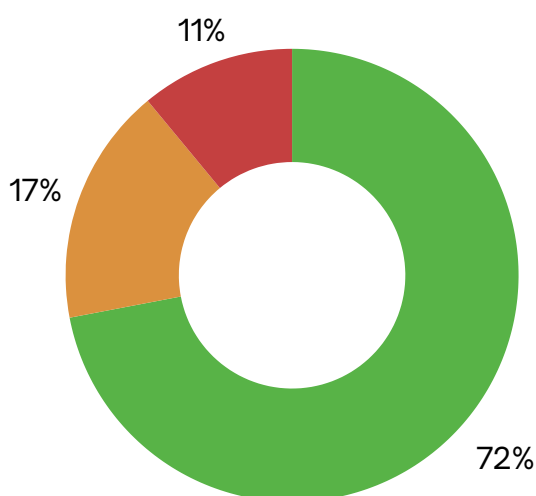
The Helpline is operated by individuals skilled in farm related issues who speak both English and Spanish and are available to receive calls about concerns, questions, and complaints between 6 p.m. – 9 p.m. eastern time daily. At all other times, a message in English and Spanish directs callers to call back during open hours, to leave a message, or to dial 911 in the case of a life-threatening emergency. Once an initial call to the Helpline is made, Helpline operators may be in contact with farm workers and growers throughout the day, as needed. If the call progresses to a complex status, the Helpline operators keep the call lines open at all times to facilitate the collection of information and path to resolution.

Types of Concerns Resolved in 2024:

- **Illegal fees**
- **Treatment or Harassment on farm**
- **Living Conditions: housing issues**
- **Compensation/Reimbursement of travel expenses**
- **Termination – unfair treatment**
- **Workplace accident & injuries, and/or workers compensation**



OUTCOMES OF REPORTED CONCERNS (2018-2024)



GAPC CERTIFICATION



Establishing a higher standard across the industry requires accountability and collaboration at every step. GAPC Certification Programs increase transparency and foster an environment that promotes sustainability, safety, fairness, and competition. GAPC Certified Growers demonstrate their commitment to producing a quality crop with industry best practices and creating a safe and compliant working environment for everyone on the farm.

The GAPC Certification Program(s) have annual requirements that begin by applying, followed by obtaining GAPC Annual Training, completing the associated self-assessment, and participating in either a Certification Audit (Audit) or Certification Site Visit (Site Visit). Monitoring Visits are paid for by the participant and are conducted by approved third party verification staff that have attended GAPC Verification Staff Training.

GAPC provides verification of Certification Standards at the farm level through a repeated two-year cycle for U.S. and/or International Tobacco Certification with a Certification Audit Followed by a Site Visit in the next year and an annual Certification Audit for U.S. and/or International Hemp Certification.





AT A GLANCE

1,848 GAPC Certified Growers



1,241 Operations with GAPC Certified Growers across **11** states

Over **1,400** Farmworkers Interviewed across **406** operations



162,093 acres of tobacco were grown by a GAPC Certified Tobacco Grower in 2024



AT A GLANCE

Tobacco Varieties grown by GAPC Certified Growers



Flue-Cured¹

1. NC 960 – 23%
2. NC 196 – 17%
3. CC 145 – 13%
4. K 326 – 11%
5. GL 365 – 9%
6. CC 143 – 7%
7. NC 1226 – 4%

Organic Flue-Cured²

1. NC 960 – 23%
2. CC 145 – 23%
3. K 326 – 17%
4. NC 196 – 15%
5. CC 143 – 13%
6. GL 365 – 6%

Burley³

1. KT 222LC – 58%
2. HB 4488PLC – 7%
3. KT 209LC – 7%
4. KT 215LC – 5%
5. KT 219LC – 5%
6. TN 90LC – 4%
7. NC 7LC – 3%
8. KY 14XL8LC – 3%

Dark Air⁴

1. DT 558LC – 26%
2. KT D6LC – 16%
3. PD 7319LC – 13%
4. KT D17LC – 10%
5. PD 7309LC – 8%
6. KT D8LC – 7%
7. SHIRLEY – 7%
8. DT 538LC – 6%
9. NL MADOLE LC – 3%

Dark Fire⁵

1. KT D6LC – 36%
2. DT 558LC – 20%
3. PD 7305LC – 12%
4. KT D17LC – 6%
5. DT 538 LC – 5%
6. PD 7309LC – 5%
7. PD 7319LC – 4%
8. TN D950 – 4%
9. SHIRLEY – 3%

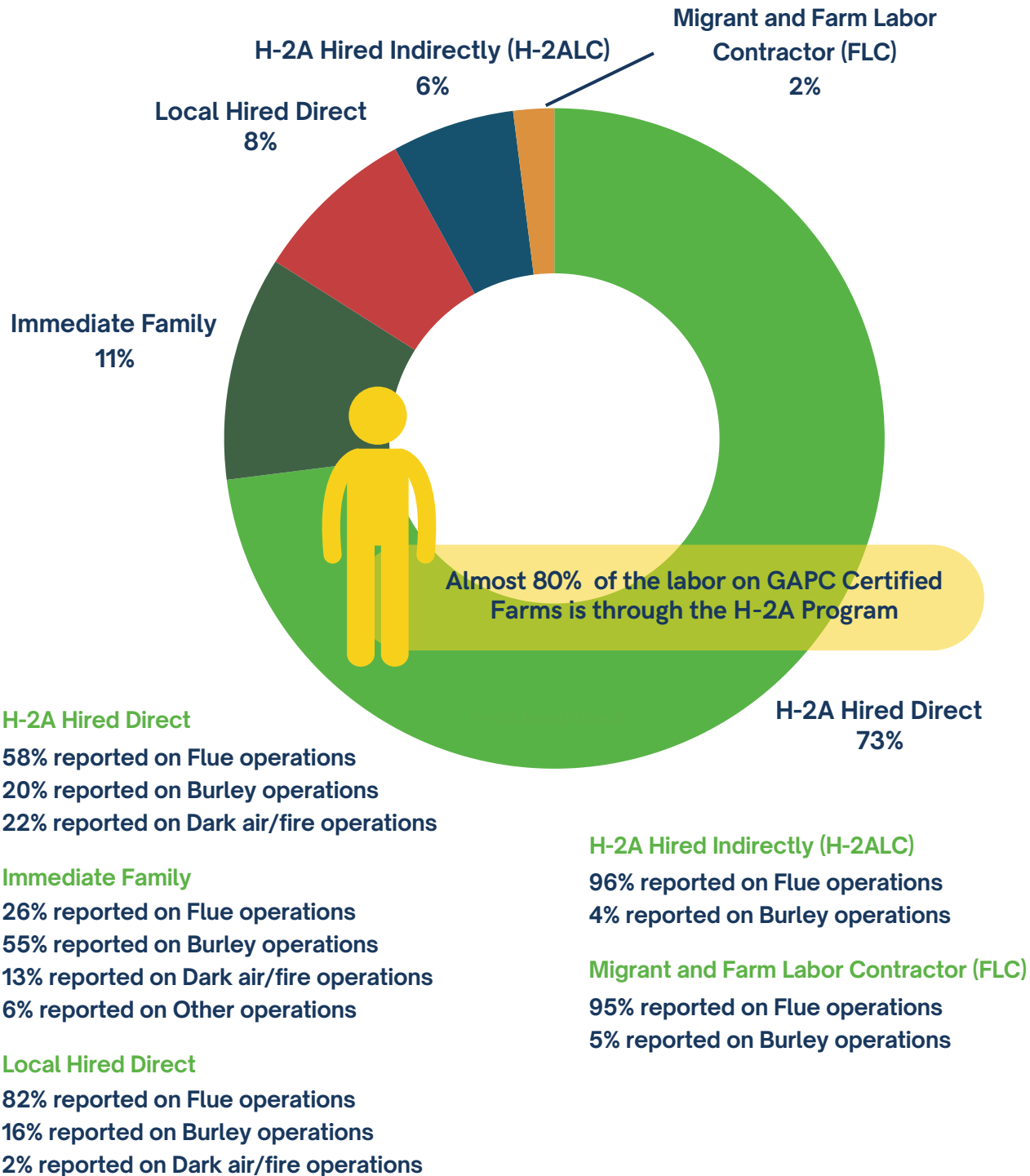
Footnotes:

1. 2% or less of the reported varieties grown (PVH 1920 ,GF 318,PVH 2343,PVH 2310,PVH 1600,PVH 2254,K 346,CC 1063,PVH 1940,NC 71,GL 395,NC 299,NC 925,NC 606,GL 386,CC 13,CC 27,GL 26H,NC 72,NC 297,PVH 2110,CC 67,NC 55,NC 986,PVH 1452,SP 236,K 394,NC 810,CC 35,NC 291,SP G70,CC 700,K 730)
2. 2% or less of the reported varieties grown (K 346, NC 1226)
3. 2% or less of the reported varieties grown (NC 7LC, KY 14 X L8LC, KT 206LC, KT 204LC,HB 4192PLC,KT 212LC,Hybrid 404LC,R7-12LC,KT 210LC,NC BH 129LC,TN 97LC,Hybrid 403LC,HB 04PLC,HP 3307PLC,N 126LC)
4. 2% or less of the reported varieties grown (VA 309, KY 171LC, PD 7318LC, Green River 1 Sucker, KT D14LC, Lit Crit, PD 7302LC, PD 7312LC)
5. 2% or less of the reported varieties grown (KT D8LC, VA 309, NL Madole LC, PD 7318LC, KT D14LC, TR Madole)



AT A GLANCE

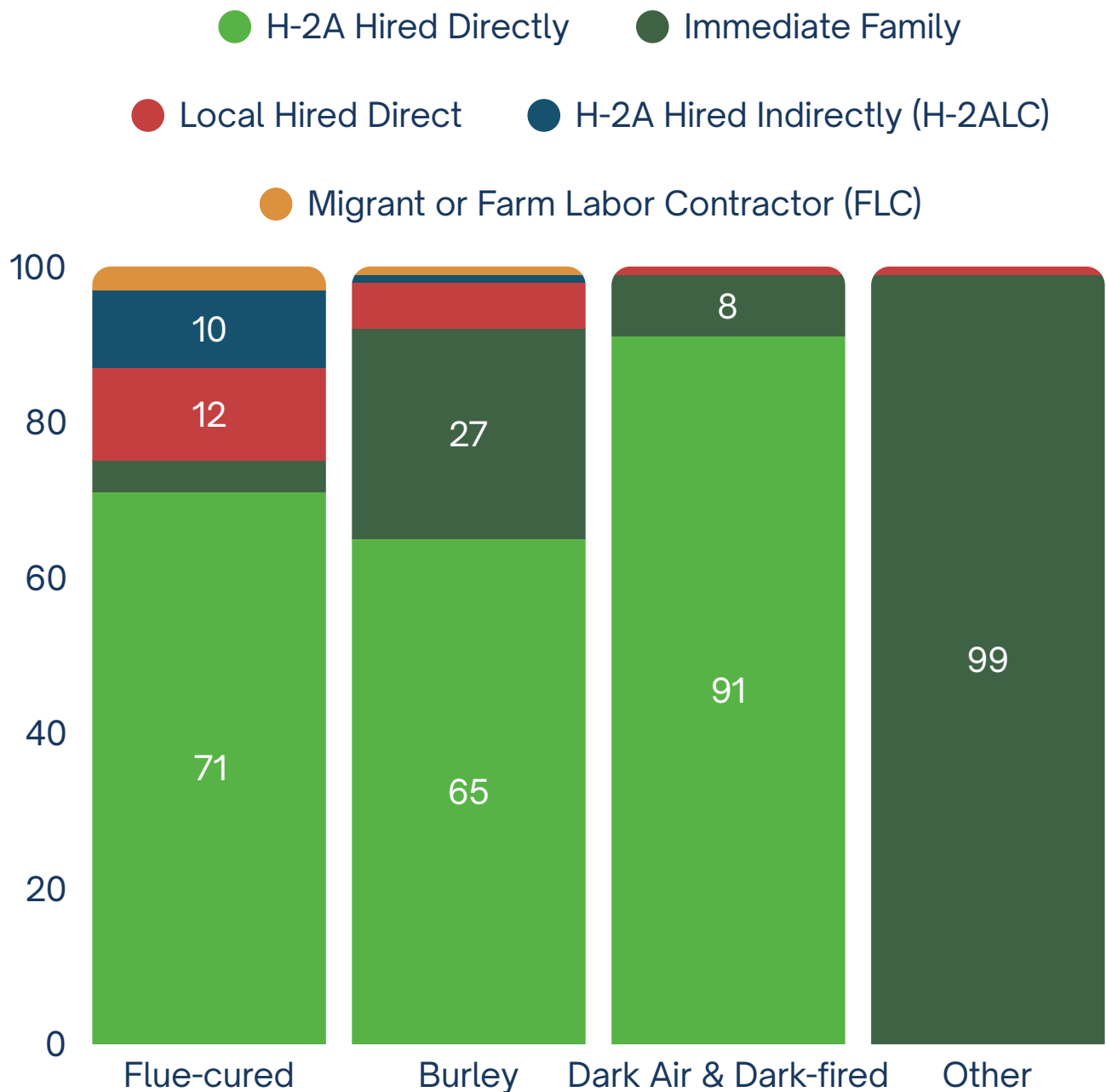
Labor Sourcing for GAPC Certified Operations





AT A GLANCE

Labor Sourcing for GAPC Certified Operations by Type of Tobacco Grown

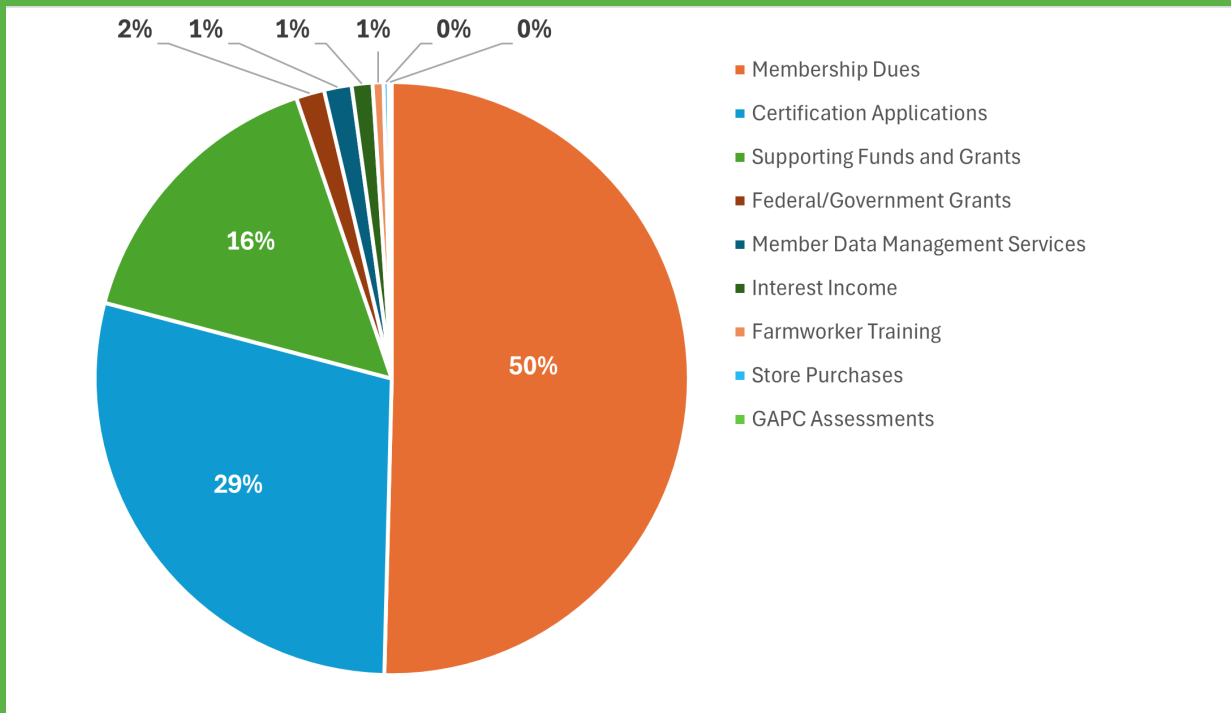


FINANCIALS

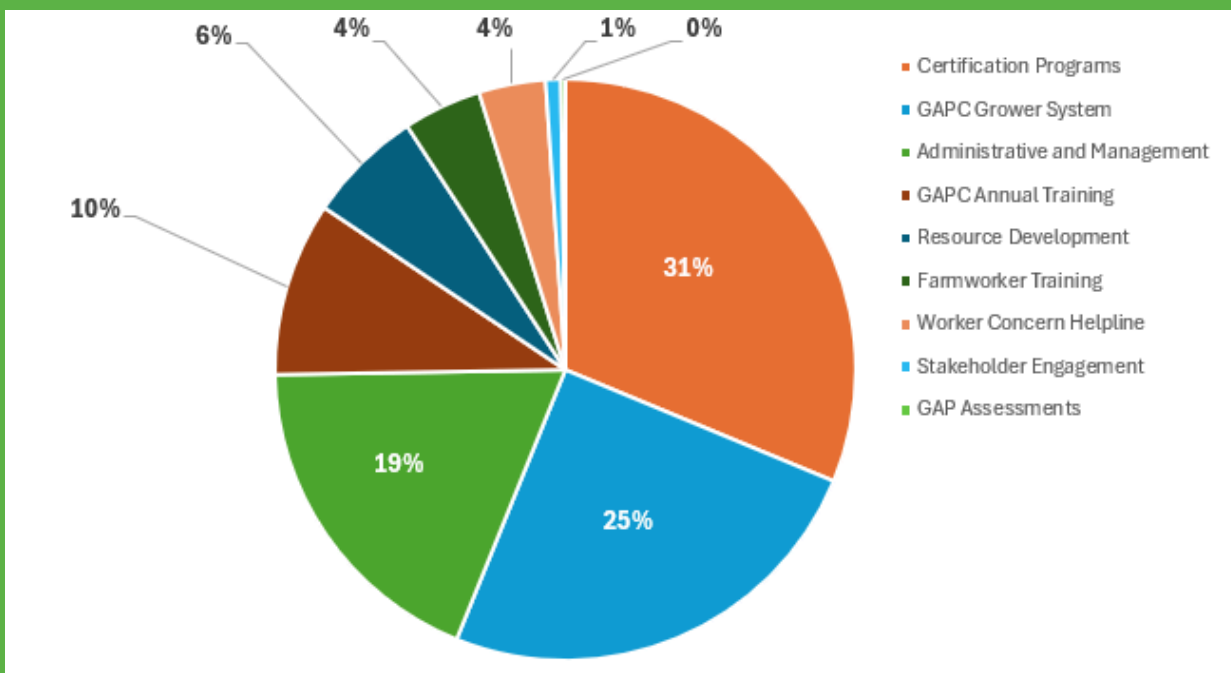
This summarized financial information is drawn from end of year financial statements for 2024 (audited financials are not complete). GAP Connections is a 501 (c) (3), non-profit agricultural membership organization which provides leadership for the adoption of agricultural standards and practices which produce a quality crop while protecting, sustaining, or enhancing the environment, ensure the safety and rights of farm laborers, and recognize those producers who are committed to a higher standard.

Income	
Membership Dues	503,676
Certification Applications	286,977
Supporting Funds and Grants	156,680
Federal/Government Grants	15,387
Member Data Management Services	15,000
Interest Income	11,303
Farmworker Training	5,925
Store Purchases	2,715
GAPC Assessments	1,700
Total Income	\$999,363
Expenditures	
Certification Programs	269,225
GAPC Grower System	214,141
Administrative and Management	160,454
GAPC Annual Training	83,401
Resource Development	55,233
Farmworker Training	37,560
Worker Concern Helpline	32,015
Stakeholder Engagement	7,323
GAP Assessments	2,089
Total Expenditures	\$861,441

Income



Expenses



THANK YOU

As GAP Connections moves forward, our commitment to excellence remains strong. GAPC will continue to strive for excellence with our cycle of continuous evaluation, refinement, and improvement – finding balance and delivering the change needed for every stakeholder to succeed. We express our gratitude to our sponsors and stakeholders for their support

CONTACT US



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