

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



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FROM THE DIRECTOR

We were glad to be back to in-person meetings and trainings in 2022, training over 3,200 growers and almost 1,000 farmworkers. We also continued success in our GAPC Tobacco Certification Program, certifying over 2,000 tobacco growers which grew 80 percent of the tobacco harvested in the U.S. To state it another way, 80 percent of tobacco harvested in the U.S. was visited by a GAPC approved third-party monitoring firm to verify the grower followed standards that reflect best practices in crop, environmental, and labor management some of which exceed U.S. regulations and laws.

We also were excited to launch several new efforts including the GAPC Hemp Certification Program and the GAPC Customized Farmworker Training Program. The GAPC Customized Farmworker Training Program allowed GAPC to have direct interaction with more farm workers and provide them interactive, educational training on the farms and equipment they worked on and used daily. The GAPC Hemp Certification Program allowed for a partnership with the U.S. Hemp Authority to be developed for 2023. These new efforts allow GAPC's services and resources to reach further into the agricultural community to more growers, workers, operations, and buyers.

These successes and new offerings are attributable to the staff, Board of Directors, Advisory Committees, stakeholders and the thousands of growers and farmworkers who continued to persevere and adapt to the ever-changing societal and business landscape. GAPC looks forward to testing two new programs related to labor and worker housing in 2023 to further expand offerings to those involved in labor-intensive agriculture.

We thank everyone who helped make another challenging year a successful year for GAP Connections.

Jane Chadwell

President and Executive Director

March 2023

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. 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.

GAPC MEMBERSHIP



GAPC has grower members across the U.S. and is governed by a Board of Directors that consists of companies, growers, and grower associations. In 2022, the GAPC Board voted to expand GAPC Grower Membership to share the services, training, and resources with other labor-intensive crops to move agriculture industries forward, together. In 2023, GAPC will allow growers of other crops to join the existing GAPC Grower Members growing tobacco and to take part in GAPC training and programs. In 2022, GAPC had over 13,000 Grower Members.

GAPC strives to be inclusive by collaborating with stakeholders throughout the supply chain to evolve and refine programs that serve all agriculture. GAPC welcomes collaboration with other organizations and sectors of agriculture that want to improve crop, environmental, and labor management practices, strive for sustainability, and respect the rights of farm laborers in their or supported supply chain.

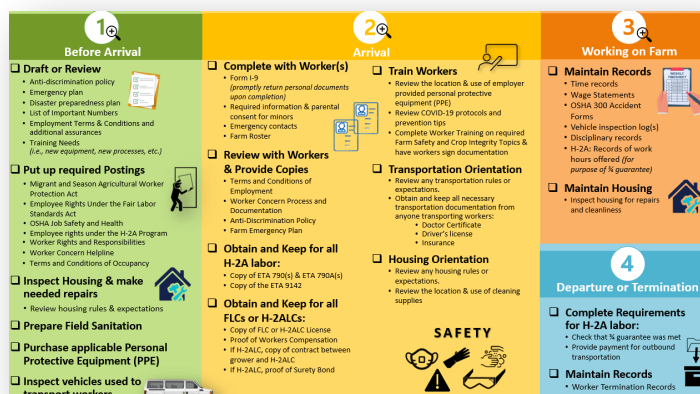
GROWER TRAINING

Training and the dissemination of information to our Grower Members remains one of the cornerstones of offerings of GAPC. In partnership with Cooperative Extension Service, government agencies, and other non-profit organizations in several states, GAPC facilitates annual training where growers learn from experts about the latest crop, environmental and labor best management practices. Through training, GAPC helps growers understand and maintain compliance with best agricultural and management practices and critical labor laws and regulations included in the GAPC Certification Program.

In 2022 GAPC training returned to in-person events hosting 47 GAPC Annual Training events. Since 2014, GAPC has facilitated or hosted about 900 GAPC Annual Training events across the eastern United States. Video training was offered for those who could not attend an in-person event.

In 2022, over 3,200 growers across 14 states completed Annual GAP Training.

The labor management section of the 2022 GAP Annual Training reviewed a new resource from GAPC, a recordkeeping infographic that detailed recordkeeping tasks prior to the arrival of workers, at arrival, during the season, and when the workers left. The labor management section also covered I9's, Farm Labor Contractors, worker training and requirements and documents with hiring labor. To review a full list of all the crop, environmental, and labor topics covered during 2022 GAPC Annual Training view the Annual Training report found on GAPC's website (www.gapconnections.com)



GAPC appreciates the valuable partnerships that help provide expert content and education to growers and farmworkers at training events. Each year GAPC partners with over 60 Specialists and County Agents in the Cooperative Extension Service at Clemson University, University of Georgia, North Carolina State University, Ohio State University, Penn State University, Purdue University, University of Kentucky, University of Tennessee, and Virginia Tech University to provide annual grower training. The US Department of Labor, state Departments of Labor, state Departments of Commerce, Mexican Consulates, state Farm Bureaus, State Advocate Monitors, and Migrant Education programs assist with labor management, farm safety, and health training, and act as a resource for growers and their workforce throughout the year.

GAPC also appreciates the Farm Labor Practices Group (FLPG)¹ for their continued financial support of our GAPC Annual Training and resource distribution. The FLPG is committed to improving labor practices on farms and thereby enhancing the farmworker's experience. The FLPG brings together key voices representing different sectors and perspectives within an environment suited for information sharing, discussion, collaboration and input. GAPC received funding from FLPG for the 2022 GAPC Annual Training.

FARMWORKER TRAINING

Agriculture ranks among the most hazardous industries in the U.S. Recognizing the need to provide health and safety training that was convenient and tailored to specific operations, GAPC began

¹ <https://farmlaborpracticesgroup.org/>

offering customized farmworker training to operations that allowed growers to choose the date, time, and topics best suited for their operation. There was a total of 14 customized farmworker trainings conducted by GAPC in 2022.

There were 256 workers trained with GAPC's new customized farmworker training program in North Carolina and Virginia.

GAPC is offering its customized farmworker training to any operation that may need safety, health, or compliance training. This broadening of GAPC's reach allowed the organization to engage with other commodities. While the main enterprise on the operations was tobacco, other crops included peanuts, hay pasture, small grains, sweet potatoes, cotton, soybeans, cucumbers, and corn.

The topics workers were trained on include general farm safety, farm equipment and machinery (includes ROPS, PTO, and machine safeguarding), green tobacco sickness-symptoms & treatment, use of personal protective equipment (PPE), farm emergency plan and response, GAPC worker rights and responsibilities, GAPC worker concern helpline, NTRM (Non-tobacco related materials) Prevention, GAPC Certification Crop Integrity (Proper baling and market separation, harvesting tobacco) First



Equipment Safety Training in North Carolina

aid/CPR, Worker Protection Standards (WPS) pesticide safety, and heat stress. The training methods include using PowerPoint slides, flipcharts, hands-on training activities, followed by an interactive questions game pertaining to topics covered at the end of training.



Farmworker practicing CPR during training in North Carolina.

Growers stated in the end of training survey that the training exceeded their expectations and would like to offer the training again next year. Workers stated they felt like the training was informative, interesting, and fun. Everyone could see the benefit of having in-person training in the native language of the workers that was both comprehensive and engaging.

GAPC hosts Farm Safety, Health, and Compliance Training Events in several states in 2022.

The events are for all those involved in a farming operation including family members and farm workers. GAP Connections (GAPC) hosted ten Farm Safety and Compliance Events in 2022. Events were held in Virginia, North Carolina, and Kentucky. Training was provided in English and Spanish.

In Virginia and North Carolina, farmworkers rotated through interactive training stations led by experts in safety and compliance topics. Topics covered included: Pesticide Safety, General Farm Safety, Green Tobacco Sickness, Equipment Safety, Health & Hygiene, Heat Illness, Basic CPR & First Aid.

174 farmworkers and 27 growers were trained at 2022 farm safety, health, and compliance events in North Carolina and Virginia.

GAPC Partners for Compliance in Virginia and North Carolina:

- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- US Department of Labor Wage & Hour Division
- Mexican Consulate
- Virginia Employment Commission
- Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
- Virginia Farm Bureau Federation
- North Carolina Department of Commerce
- North Carolina Department of Agriculture Pesticide Safety Division
- North Carolina Department of Labor Occupational Safety & Health Division
- North Carolina Human Trafficking Commission
- Association of Mexicans in North Carolina, Inc.
- Greene County Healthcare, Inc.
- Access East, Inc.



Farmworkers gather around the Virginia Workforce Development table in Virginia.

In Virginia, growers were provided training on topics such as managing farm stress and mental health and an orientation on the new GAPC Housing Training Kit for employer-provided farmworker housing. In North Carolina, growers were provided training on managing farm stress and mental health, heat illness plans, farm emergency & disaster plans, and orientation on the new GAPC Housing Training Kit for employer-provided farmworker housing.

In Kentucky, GAPC took a new approach to farmworker training by taking the training closer to the grower by offering training on farms and at county Cooperative Extension offices. Five farm locations and three county Cooperative Extension offices in Kentucky were selected as host sites for farmworker training conducted by Francisca Rios, GAPC Farmworker Training Program Coordinator, and Guillermo Fernandez, Farmworker Training Program Trainer.

481 farmworkers and 40 growers were trained at 2022 farm safety, health, and compliance events in Kentucky.

The training focused on smaller groups and getting workers to participate in interactive activities that allowed them to engage with each other and the trainers. Training topics covered in the two-hour training session included: General Farm Safety, CPR & First Aid, Farm Equipment Safety (includes ROPS & PTO), Worker Protection Standards, Health & Hygiene, Personal Protective Equipment, Heat Stress, Green Tobacco Sickness, Barn Safety, Carbon Monoxide Prevention, Farmworkers Rights & Responsibilities, and the GAPC Worker Concern Helpline.

Farm Safety & Compliance Events and Farmworker Training are not possible without our partnerships and the generous sponsorships from businesses, associations, companies, and others in the agricultural industry.



Workers are participating in an activity demonstrating risk in Kentucky.



Workers learn about the warnings on CPA labels in Scottsville, Kentucky.

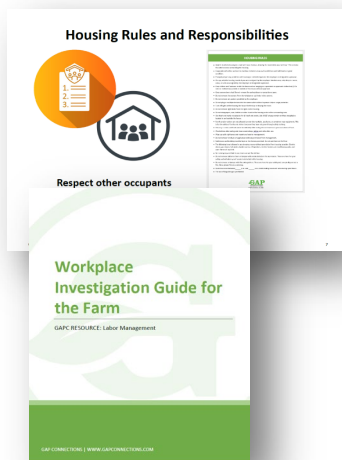


Altria



RESOURCES

GAPC continues to develop and provide record templates and resources to its GAPC Grower Members to aid them in their adoption of best management practices and recordkeeping.



In 2022, GAPC developed a Workplace Investigation Guide for the Farm. The purpose of this document is to provide farm owners and managers with information and guidance that can assist with creating an investigation policy and conducting an investigation into worker concerns or issues.

GAPC also developed a Worker Housing Kit designed for growers or Farm Labor Contractors (FLCs) who provide housing to farmworkers. This kit will aid in the preparation, discussion, training, and maintaining of compliant, clean, and enjoyable housing for occupants and includes instructions, best practices, recordkeeping templates, posters, and training material.

GAPC resources for growers and farmworkers can be found online for free or for purchase at www.gapconnections.com.

GAPC CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

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.

GAPC Grower Members who participate in a GAPC Certification Program have annual requirements that begin by submitting an application for the program, 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 GAPC Grower Member who applies to participate and are conducted by approved 3rd party auditors that have attended GAPC Auditor Training.

Since 2014, GAPC has conducted over **8,700** monitoring visits and interviewed over **13,000** farmworkers to assess and verify adoption and compliance with best practices in crop, environment, and labor management.

GAPC provides verification of Certification Standards at the farm level through the GAPC Tobacco Certification Program and the GAPC Hemp Certification Program. The GAPC Tobacco Certification Program is a two-year cycle with a Certification Audit followed by a Site Visit in the next year. The GAPC Hemp Certification Program involves a Full Audit every year.

The Audit covers all Critical and Additional Standards and includes worker interviews. A Site Visit covers all the Critical Standards and only includes worker interviews if labor is hired indirectly (i.e., use of a FLC), there were worker concerns in previous year, there is a change in labor source, or the grower requests them to be completed. To be GAPC Certified, growers must achieve and maintain 100 percent compliance with GAPC Critical Certification Standards, 75 percent of the GAPC Certification Additional Standards and adhere to the Monitoring Activity Code of Conduct and all other Terms and Conditions of GAPC Certification. Growers must keep and maintain the records listed in the GAPC Certification Compliance Guide and Certification Records and Materials List found on our website, www.gapconnections.com. These records will be reviewed by the auditor during the Monitoring Visit.



2022



1,507 Monitoring Visits conducted.
1,610 Worker Interviews completed.



2,165 GAPC Certified Grower Members on
1,478 Operations in **11** States.



162,764 Tobacco Acres and **290** Hemp
Acres grown by a GAPC Certified Grower.



16,514 Farm Workers on operations
managed by a GAPC Certified Grower.

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 2022, the GAPC Helpline received 51 worker concerns, in addition to concerns raised by workers during GAPC Monitoring Activities. Of those 51 worker concerns, 68 percent were in scope and resolved, 18 percent did not provide sufficient information or credible evidence, and 14 percent were out of scope and sent to an alternative resource. The number of concerns include 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.

GAPC strives for resolution of concerns and to aid growers in implementing new policies, training, or communication methods to prevent future concerns. Workplace injuries and related workers' compensation processes continue to be a challenging issue for workers and growers. GAPC will be hosting a webinar series on workers' compensation in 2023 to provide information on best practices and to increase the understanding of state-by-state processes that can be difficult for all parties to navigate. GAPC also offers translation services for those operations that need help explaining processes and next steps for the workers.



The workers who call into the GAPC WCH have continued to express thanks for the responsive service in their native language. The workers involved with one of our more challenging cases this year made a video call to the WCH and each one thanked the operator for listening and supporting them.

Type of Concerns Resolved

- Request for information related to labor laws, medical resources, health insurance, etc.
- Workplace accidents and workers compensation
- Communication challenges (translation)
- Treatment
- Illegal fees
- Poor housing
- Payroll discrepancies

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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.

GAPC Board of Directors

- Frank Geovannello, Altria
- Eric Walker, Burley Stabilization Corporation
- Haoqing "Viggo" Wang, China Tobacco International (North America)
- Jennie Salyer, Gallatin Redrying & Storage
- Brent Leggett, Grower
- Donald Mitchell, Grower
- Dale Seay, Grower
- Linda McMurtry, Hail & Cotton
- John Radcliff, JTI
- Lily Bland, Pyxus
- Madison Hilton, R. J. Reynolds
- Robbie Parker, R.J. Reynolds (Chairperson)
- Randy Henderson, Swisher International
- Al Pedigo, The Council for Burley Tobacco
- Tim Yarbrough, Tobacco Growers Assoc. of NC
- Declan Curran, U.S. Tobacco Coop. Inc.
- Christian Clifton, United Tobacco Company
- Hunter Mason, Universal Leaf

Grower Advisory Committee

- Craig Armstrong, Ohio
- Andy Miller, Pennsylvania
- Donald Mitchell, Kentucky
- Jason Crouch, Tennessee
- Dale Seay, Kentucky
- Nathan Musser, Kentucky
- Jason Clary, Virginia
- Archie Griffin, North Carolina
- Brent Leggett, North Carolina
- Jackson Lord, Florida
- Matt Stevens, South Carolina
- Al Pedigo, Kentucky
- Tim Yarbrough, North Carolina

Farm Worker Advisory Committee

- Rick Alexander, Agriculture Workforce Management Association
- Deborah Bourland, KY Migrant Education Program
- Frank Geovannello, Altria
- Nancy Hagan, NC Project NO Rest
- Robbie Parker, RJ Reynolds
- Jennifer Poole, VA Agriculture Grower Association
- Beth Rodman, NC Department of Labor
- Lee Wicker, NC Growers Association
- Lynn Whitehouse, KY OSHA
- Richard Blaylock, US DOL Wage & Hour *(Technical Advisory Role Only)*
- Miguel Perez, US DOL Wage & Hour *(Technical Advisory Role Only)*

FINANCIALS

Audited financials will be posted online at the conclusion of audit. The 2021 Financial Report can be found online at www.gapconnections.com.