



2024 Annual Training Report

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INTRODUCTION



One of the largest efforts by GAP Connections (GAPC) is the education and training of growers and farm workers. GAPC believes it is critical to provide information and training to assist growers and farm workers with the best management practices that produce a quality crop while protecting, sustaining or enhancing the environment, and ensuring the safety and rights of farm workers. This report provides data and information on GAPC's 2024 training activities.

2024 GAPC ANNUAL TRAINING FOR TOBACCO GROWERS

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.

The training topics are chosen each year by the GAP Connections Training Committee in conjunction with stakeholder input such as Cooperative Extension Educators and Specialists, Federal and State agencies and departments, and other non-governmental organizations with an interest in crop, environmental, or labor management practices. The topics are also tailored for the location to best serve and relate to the grower operations and concerns in that region.

In 2024, Annual GAP Training was offered through in-person training or online through the Grower Dashboard. See Table 1 for 2024 Annual GAP Training Attendance by Grower Location and Event Type.

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.

Growers receive vital information from presenters at Annual GAP Training, and have an opportunity to interact and ask questions, creating relationships that will help them now and in the future. Growers who have attended training have repeatedly indicated that Annual GAP Training is a critical source of information to improve management practices and that positive changes have been made to their operation from the information they gained by attending. To see a list of 2024 in-person training topics see Appendix A.

Forty-nine (49) in-person training events were scheduled for 2024. These in-person training opportunities were a combination of GAPC planned training in selected locations and training following or in conjunction with an industry partner's event such as company or grower association meeting.



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). To see a list of 2024 online training topics see Appendix B.

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.

2024 TRAINING PARTNERS

- Dr. Daisy Ahumada, North Carolina State University
- Dr. Andy Bailey, University of Kentucky
- 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 Division
- Dr. Ramsey Lewis, North Carolina State University
- William A. Long, North Carolina 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
- Dr. Matthew Vann, North Carolina State University
- Dr. Yuan Zeng, Virginia Tech

TABLE 1: 2024 ANNUAL GAP TRAINING ATTENDANCE BY GROWER LOCATION AND EVENT TYPE

State	Total	In-Person	Online
FL	9	8	1
GA	62	60	2
IL	3	3	0
IN	19	19	0
KY	949	720	229
MO	5	0	5
NC	895	734	161
OH	19	18	1
PA	124	124	0
SC	77	64	13
TN	285	200	85
VA	159	150	9
WI	1	1	0
Total	2,607	2,101	506



2024 GAPC ANNUAL TRAINING SPONSORS



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.





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.

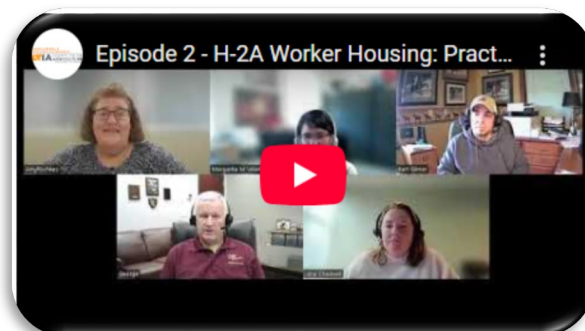
In August, GAPC hosted “*Understanding the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR) and How the AEWR is Calculated*” with guest speaker Theresa Varner, Farm Labor Specialist, USDA-NASS Statistics Division, Environmental and Demographics Branch. This webinar focused on the USDA-NASS Farm Labor Program which is 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” PODCAST

“*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





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 FARM WORKERS WERE TRAINED IN 5 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.

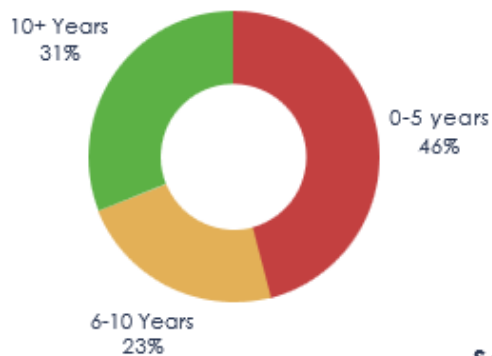


GAPC Grower Members earn Farm Safety & Health Training Credits on their Training Report for hosting a customized farmworker training for their workers. In 2024, 80 growers earned this credit.

TABLE 2: 2024 CUSTOMIZED FARMWORKER TRAINING

State	Number of Trainings	Number of Workers	Number of Growers
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

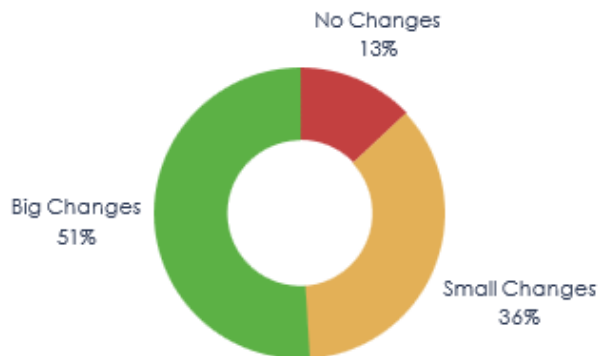
NUMBER OF YEARS WORKED ON FARM



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.

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.

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



2024 FARMWORKER TRAINING COURSE OFFERINGS

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 of topics allows us to work with a variety of industries and sectors of agriculture.

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.



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

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 farm 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!



CROP AND ENVIRONMENTAL BEST MANAGEMENT TOPICS

2024 Tobacco Production Information and Agronomic Updates in Flue

- Disease Identification & Management
 - Tobacco Leaf Spot Fungicide Trial
 - Black Shank Management
- Greenhouse and Field IPM
- Fungicide Resistance
- Transplant Water Additives and Starter Fertilizers
- Greenhouse Production Updates
- Flue-cured Variety Testing & Variety Updates
- Coragen Residuals and Side dressing Applications
- Insecticide Efficacy & Management
- Scouting Recommendations & Updates

2024 Tobacco Production Information and Agronomic Updates in Dark

- Update on Yield Trials and Low Converter (LC) Seed Screening
- Angular Leaf Spot Trial Update and Best Management Practices
- Flea Beetle Demonstration and Best Management Practices
- Dark-Fired Variety Trial Update

2024 Tobacco Production Information and Agronomic Updates in Burley

- 2024 Variety Review
- Soil pH and Liming
 - Soil pH impacts on tobacco
 - Lime quality and calculating lime rates
 - Pelleted Lime vs. Ag Lime
- Air-Curing Best Management Practices

LABOR BEST MANAGEMENT TOPICS

- 2023 Adverse Effect Wage Rate Rule
- Update on the H-2A Visa Program and Understanding the Big 6
- Recordkeeping Best Management Practices
- Form I-9 Update and Requirements
- OSHA Form 300 Updates and Requirements
- Understanding Illegal Recruitment Fees
 - Challenges, Consequences, Best Management Practices, Resources
- Human Resources Legal Helpline Partnership with Jackson Lewis

GAPC UPDATES

- 2023 Certification Program Update
- 2024 Certification Application Announcement & How to Apply for the Certification Program
- Tips for Successfully Completing the Self-Assessment
- Tools for Certification Program Success
 - Deadlines
 - Certification Compliance & Remediation Guides
 - Recordkeeping & Record Template Updates
- GAPC Customized Farmworker Training & Cost Share Program

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

- Farm Stress Management
- Mental Health Awareness among Farmers and Laborers & Resources Available
- Tobacco Situation and Outlook
- 2024 Projected Production Costs & Budgets
 - Contract Volumes
 - Fertilizer Prices
 - Chemical Prices

APPENDIX B: 2024 ONLINE GAPC ANNUAL TRAINING COURSES

Tobacco Crop and Environmental Online Courses:	
Cover Crops for Tobacco Production	UKY Hidden Soil Compaction Impacts on Tobacco Production
Soil Test Interpretation & Fertilizer Reporting	UKY Fire-curing Techniques: Traditional vs. High Volume Fire-Curing
Disposal of CPAs and CPA Containers	UKY Potassium Source Recommendations
UKY Angular Leaf Spot Update*	UGA Frenching Manganese Deficiency
UKY Flea Beetle Update*	UGA Tobacco Mosaic Virus
NCSU 2024 Variety Selection Decisions*	UGS Cigarette Beetles in Carryover Tobacco
NCSU Tobacco Greenhouse Management*	NCSU Nozzle Selection for MH Applications
NCSU 2024 Coragen Update*	NCSU Tobacco Weed Management
NCSU Placement of Tobacco Insecticide at Transplanting*	NCSU Tobacco Flea Beetle Biology & Management
NCSU Placement of Tobacco Fungicides & Fertilizer at Transplanting*	NCSU Identifying Injury Caused by Minor Pests in Tobacco
UT Chemical Topping	NCSU Tobacco Budworm Biology & Significance Part 1
UT Variety Updates and Time of MH Application	NCSU Tobacco Budworm Biology & Significance Part 2
UKY Air-Curing Management	NCSU Scouting Recommendations & Methods in Tobacco
UKY Basic Angular Leaf Spot	NCSU Using the Tobacco Thrips Flight & TSWV Intensity Predictor

***Indicates new course for 2024**

Hemp Crop and Environmental Online Courses:	
Hemp Diseases & Management	Cannabis Disease 101
UT Field Trial Research	Cannabis Disease Management: Considerations & Concepts
Insect Monitoring & Management for Outdoor Hemp Production	

Labor Online Courses:	
Illegal Fees*	FLSA MSPA H-2A Coverage & Exemptions
Understanding the GAP Standards for OSHA 300 Forms & Reporting Rules for OSHA*	Terms & Conditions of Transportation for Migrant & Seasonal Workers
Understanding the GAP Standard for Form I-9's & Completing the Form I-9*	MSPA Disclosure Record Keeping Wages and Wage Statements
Form I-9	FLSA MSPA H-2A Discipline, Retaliation, Termination, Notification
What is Retaliation?	Farmworker Housing Training Orientation
FLC, FLCE & H-2ALC Registration and Requirements	Housing Terms and Conditions
H-2A Recruitment & Preferential Treatment	Field Sanitation
H-2A Hours Offered & ¾ Guarantee	Forklift Safety Training
H-2A Disclosure Record Keeping Wages and Wage Statements	Hazard + Alert + Skid Steer Loaders
Terms & Conditions of Transportation for H-2A Workers	

***Indicates new course for 2024**

GAPC Update & Overview Online Courses:	
2024 Tobacco and Hemp Certification Programs*	Tobacco Growers and Stress
Farm Succession Basics	GAPC Infographic & Labor Best Management Practices
Emergency Plans via Risk Management	

***Indicates new course for 2024**