

THE GEORGIA SEED CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

by

S. P. Darby
Chief of Reforestation
Georgia Forestry Commission

HISTORY

During the January 1956 session of the Georgia Legislature, two bills were introduced regarding seed. One bill (H.B. 195) dealt with the licensing of seed dealers, while the second bill (H.B. 104) provided a method for the guarantee of high quality seed and for protection of the public against false claims. Officials of the College of Agriculture, University of Georgia, were authorized to provide for seed certification and the Georgia Crop Improvement Association were designated as certifying agents.

As a result of the two bills, the Georgia Chapter, Society of American Foresters, during February 1956, appointed a committee to investigate the possibilities of obtaining certified forest tree seed and to draw up preliminary standards, provided same appeared to be feasible.

Officials of the Crop Improvement Association were contacted and made aware of our needs for higher quality seed. Our program was received by them in a most cordial manner and we were advised to prepare specific ways of accomplishing our objective, plus individual crop standards for material to be certified. Last March and April the committee held several meetings and as a result preliminary standards were drafted. These standards were presented to the Georgia Chapter during its annual meeting and members present voted to adopt same and to proceed to put this program into effect as recommended in the committee report.

The first task in obtaining certification was to develop firm standards and adequate machinery for putting the program into effect. The preliminary standards had to be expanded and things such as, charges to be made, how applications are to be processed, forms to be used, etc., had to be dealt with. The committee felt these should be kept as simple as possible and that as the program grows, refinements will be made.

The second item to be dealt with before our program will be an actuality, is acceptance by the legal certifying agency. Since State law specifies who shall have this responsibility, acceptance by them is a must.

PURPOSE OF PROGRAM

Perhaps there are those present that question the need for this program. I, for one, feel that it will be one of the greatest aids to forestry that has been developed in recent years. Anyone that has been connected with the procurement of seed knows what I am talking about. Those of you who have not had the pleasure of cone collection work will have to take my word for it but, at times, it is like buying "a pig in a poke". A method is needed whereby the forester has some guarantee of seed quality, or at least knows the type material he is purchasing.

At the time the certification standards were being written, the committee felt that this program had a two-fold purpose. The immediate objective is to raise the quality of seed currently being used, thus improving stands now being established. The ultimate objective is to make available and maintain sources of high quality seed and propagation material of genetic superiority.

MECHANICS OF CERTIFICATION

Let us now briefly look at how certification is to be accomplished. As previously stated, the G.C.I.A., will be the legal agency for placing the Blue tag on the seed sacks. All administrative details will be handled by them. A permanent forest tree seed certification committee has been appointed by the Georgia Chapter, S.A.F. This committee is composed of five members and is to serve in an advisory capacity to the Crop Improvement Association. Only those races, strains or varieties that are approved by the Seed Certification Committee and accepted by the Certifying Agency will be eligible. The Executive Secretary of the G.C.I.A., plus the Certification Committee, will review and either approve or disapprove all applications. Field work, such as inspections, will be done by Crop Improvement Association personnel.

Four classes of material will be eligible to receive the Association tag. These are material from:

- (a) Seed Producing Areas
- (b) Seed Orchards.
- (c) Superior Trees or Strains.
Open Pollinated Select Trees.

Each class of material previously mentioned must meet definite prescribed crop standards. Procedure for obtaining certification will vary depending on the class of material, however, each has several things in common. The individual contemplating having material certified must become a member of the G.C.I.A., and a formal application for certification must be filed with the Association. At the time of application, necessary fees must be paid.

Seed Producing Areas and Seed Orchards must meet minimum crop standards at the time of application. The Association, or its authorized, representative, will inspect the area and report their findings to the Certification Committee. The Committee and Secretary of the Crop Improvement Association, at a properly convened meeting, will determine if the area meets the prescribed standards and either approve or disapprove the application. In order for the area to remain certified, periodical inspections will be made. Yearly certification certificates will be issued so long as an area meets the minimum standards. In event an area fails to meet the prescribed standards the individual will be advised in writing and given a definite time to correct the sub-standard practices.

Individuals desiring to have specific races or strains certified must present acceptable proof of such superiority to the G.C.I.A., and Seed Certification Committee at the time of application. The Committee will evaluate any and all proof of superiority and refer same to the proper forest Experiment Station for testing or verification, if same warrants. Once tested or approved by the Experiment Station, the application will be processed as previously outlined.

Landowner or individual making application to have material from open pollinated select trees certified, will specify the location, species, and size of stand where the collection is to be made. The area will be inspected by a qualified graduate or registered forester, who is approved by the Crop Improvement Association, to determine if collection is feasible. If an area or stand is approved for collection, then the select trees will be marked in a prescribed manner by the approved forester. At the time the selected trees are marked, an estimate or cruise will be made to determine the approximate number of bushels of cones which will be produced. This data, anticipated yield, is to be confidential and available only to the Association.

Immediately prior to the collection of cones, the Association is to be notified so that field inspections can be made as needed.

None of the above four categories will qualify for certification unless the seed are processed in a manner approved by the Certifying Agency.

This is only a brief resume of the proposed tree seed certification program in Georgia. Regretfully time will not allow a detailed report on individual crop standards for each particular type of material. Today I have tried to explain how we went about organizing our seed certification program. I hope it will prove helpful to many of you interested in this work.

We're happy that the seed certification program here in Georgia is about to become a reality. I am most confident that on February 1st, when our standards are presented to the Board of Directors of the G.C.I.A. at their annual meeting, Georgia will have the machinery for obtaining certified forest tree seed.