

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Metrolina Greenhouses Receives GlobalG.A.P. Certification

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Metrolina Greenhouses announced in December that it is the first ornamentals producer in the U.S. to become GlobalG.A.P. Certified.

GlobalG.A.P. is a worldwide brand of smart farm assurance solutions that rigorously audits agriculture, floriculture, aquaculture and compound feed producers against world-leading standards to ensure they're using good agricultural practices. GlobalG.A.P. certification—commonly used and required to ensure food safety standards in food production—is currently a voluntary standard for ornamentals production.

Becoming GlobalG.A.P. Certified provides Metrolina Greenhouses' retail partners and end consumers with the assurance that its plants are produced in a safe, responsible and sustainable manner to ensure high quality and garden success.

The mission of the third-party certification body—headquartered in Cologne, Germany—is to “foster the global adoption of safer and more sustainable farming practices by providing industry-leading, cost-efficient and value-adding assurance and benchmarking solutions.”

The GlobalG.A.P. Integrated Farm Assurance standard for flowers and ornamentals is a global standard for the responsible farming of flowers and ornamentals that covers all stages of production, from propagation to basic postharvest handling. It includes requirements on topics such as soil and water management, plant protection, plant nutrition, biodiversity, environmental sustainability, energy efficiency, workers' health, safety and well-being, and management and traceability.

According to GlobalG.A.P., the standard allows producers to measure their progress, demonstrate their commitment to improving the sustainability of surrounding ecosystems and improve the efficiency of their farm operations.

Metrolina Greenhouses' pursuit of GlobalG.A.P. Certification was encouraged by its involvement in the Floriculture Sustainability Initiative (FSI), according to Dr. Mark Yelanich, Metrolina Greenhouses' Director of Research and Development, who spearheaded the certification effort.

FSI is a Belgian-led organization initiated in 2012 by 25 floriculture industry founding members, with the intention to develop more sustainable solutions for farmers, for the environment and for the future of the floriculture sector.

“I am very pleased with the entire GlobalG.A.P. philosophy,” Mark said. “GlobalG.A.P. gave Metrolina an opportunity

to get credit for our production practices, while giving us a framework to continuously improve our entire process.

“In addition, GlobalG.A.P. allowed us to identify potential risks to our operation and come up with processes to address these risks. This program is audited, so it holds the growers accountable, which is very important for any sustainability scheme.”

Metrolina Greenhouses’ GlobalG.A.P. Certification is a distinction that reinforces the operation’s core values, which include its commitment to integrity, quality, innovation, sustainability and creating a world-class employee experience, said co-CEO Abe VanWingerden.

“We are excited to be the first ornamentals greenhouse operation in the U.S. to receive GlobalG.A.P. certification, a milestone that aligns Metrolina Greenhouses with its mission to lead by example in the floriculture industry,” Abe said.

“Every member of our team operates with the goal of improving by 1% every day, so seeing this effort come to fruition is a big step in the right direction.” **GT**