

PRESS RELEASE

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Canada's Hemp Industry Calls for Deregulation

The Canadian Hemp Trade Alliance (CHTA), the industry association representing Canada's hemp food and fibre growers, processors and retailers, has called on Canadian government to deregulate the production, processing and export of industrial hemp. In a formal request to the Prime Minister and the federal Ministers of Agriculture and Health as well as prairie provincial premiers and agriculture ministers the CHTA claims the regulatory burden placed on the industry has become an impediment to its growth.

Canada's industrial hemp production and processing is currently managed by Health Canada's Office of Controlled Substances due to its botanical connection with marijuana. However, industrial hemp contains little or no tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and, since it was approved for production in 1998, there have been no instances of quality problems or health concerns related to this crop. As a result of a recent regulatory review, Health Canada has proposed some minor amendments to their regulatory measures, but these efforts are completely inadequate to respond to the huge surge in demand for industrial hemp products.

Since 2008 industrial hemp production in Canada has expanded from 8000 acres to current levels of 66,671 acres. The CHTA projects acres will exceed 100,000 in the next one to two years – a 1250% growth. As the development of new, higher yielding varieties advances and prices remain high for industrial hemp (\$700 to \$1000/acres gross returns) this growth trend is very likely to continue. Health Canada is hard pressed to keep up with the growing demands for production permits and crop testing requirements due to this rapid expansion coupled with federal government cutbacks.

"It is time for the Canadian government to release the unnecessary regulatory burden on industrial hemp and allow this important crop to flourish" says Russ Crawford, newly elected President of the CHTA. "At an important time when farmers need a high return rotational crop that is in strong demand by consumers, industrial hemp offers a significant advantage to traditional crops". Industrial hemp does not use the traditional handling and transportation system which is currently running at maximum capacity due to record Canadian crop production. "It is time for a change to manage industrial hemp under Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and allow that agency to oversee this important crop just as it does with all other cereal, oilseed and pulse crops grown in Canada. We are in a position to become the global leaders in the production and processing of industrial hemp", adds Crawford. "We need government to facilitate that expansion, not constrain it."

For more information on this important initiative contact Russ Crawford (403) 256-2026.

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