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General Questions

What is the Industrial Hemp Regulation Program?



Government
Health Partners



The Industrial Hemp Regulation Program permits Canadian farmers to grow low-TCH cannabis for industrial use, under controlled circumstances. This program administers the regulatory approval process for the commercial production of industrial hemp. It is comprised of a system of licences, permits and authorizations for all persons in Canada engaged in the cultivation, distribution, importation, exportation, and processing of industrial hemp. The program started on March 12, 1998, when the  [Industrial Hemp Regulations](#) came into effect.

What is industrial hemp?

Industrial Hemp is a tall, leafy plant with a strong fibrous stalk. Although Industrial Hemp varieties are members of the cannabis plant family, they contain very low levels of the psychoactive ingredient THC (delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol). Industrial Hemp plants contain 0.3% THC or less in their leaves and flowering parts.

Why did the government change its laws to allow the growing of hemp?

In the 1980s and 1990s, there was increased interest in the cultivation of industrial hemp as a potential source of new jobs in the agricultural and industrial sectors. As well, there was an increased need to develop alternative sources of fibre. Research conducted between 1994 and 1998 showed it could be successfully grown in Canada as a separate entity from cannabis (marijuana). With the demand and encouraging research findings, Health Canada chose to give the agricultural and industrial sectors the opportunity to grow and exploit industrial hemp in a controlled fashion. Laws were amended to allow for the cultivation of industrial hemp.

When was the first licence issued to permit the growth of industrial hemp for commercial purposes?

Although the growth of industrial hemp crops was previously permitted for scientific research purposes, the first licence to grow industrial hemp for commercial purposes was issued in May 1998.

What are the potential uses?

Fibre from stalks can be used in making paper, textiles, rope or twine, and construction materials. Grain from industrial hemp can be used in food products, cosmetics, plastics and fuel.

Is it easy to grow?

In other countries, industrial hemp has proven to be a hardy, fast growing, resilient and high yield crop. In Canada, industrial hemp has shown good potential as an alternative to be included in rotation with other, more traditional crops. Its short growth period of 85-120 days makes it well suited for cultivation in many parts of Canada. If planted at the proper time, it reportedly suppresses most weeds. Insect and disease problems must be managed like any other crop.

How is the program doing?

To get an overview of the Industrial Hemp Program and its progress in Canada, visit the page called [Statistics, Reports & Fact Sheets on Hemp](#). It has up to date reports and fact sheets on the program and its activities.

About Applications



If I want a licence, when should I apply?

For cultivators, it is preferable to receive your application for a growing licence in the winter or early spring prior to the growing season. You may apply for a licence as early as mid-November in the previous year. The latest you should apply for the upcoming growing season is April 30.

For all other activities, submit your documents providing sufficient time for the

evaluation of the licence application and the generation of a licence. The Industrial Hemp Regulation Program has a service standard that aims at a 10-day turn around for a simple application containing no errors. A research licence application may take longer, particularly if it is for a new type of project or concept that requires a policy decision, or legal opinion.

Where can I get an application form?

You can download most of the documentation you require from this website, or obtain copies from Health Canada's Regional Offices or the [Office of Controlled Substances](#). Look under the [Contact section](#) of this website for the contact information of the Industrial Hemp Regulation Program.

Where do I send my application?

Your application should be sent to:
Office of Controlled Substances
Industrial Hemp Regulations Program
123 Slater Street, 2nd floor
A.L. 3502A
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 1B9

What documents do I need to include with my application?

You must include the following documents and information:



1. Original police criminal record check(s)
2. Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates (for those cultivating)
3. Original signatures on all documents
4. Appropriate schedules with the industrial hemp licence application
5. All supporting documents (from the Canadian Seed Growers' Association or Canadian Food Inspection Agency if required) Please note that a faxed application is enough to begin the application process but the originals are needed before you licence can be issued.

For how long are licences and permits valid?



Licences are issued on a calendar year basis and expire on the December 31st immediately following the issuance of the licence or authorization, unless otherwise specified. Permits are valid for three months. Licence holders must reapply each year providing information that is current at the time of the application. The Office of Controlled Substances will accept applications as early as mid-November for licensing in the following year to ensure persons requiring a licence or authorization for carry-over material have an opportunity to obtain the necessary documents.

Where can I get more information about program requirements?

The document  [Industrial Hemp Regulations](#) describes the amendments to the  [Controlled Drugs and Substances Act](#). It also describes in detail the application process, causes of licence revocation, record keeping procedures, security measures, and so on. Consult this document when you want fine details of the amendments to the *Act*. (To view these documents click on any of the underlined titles mentioned here.)

If you're interested in the background to the development of the Industrial Hemp Regulations, you may wish to read the [Regulatory Impact Analysis Statement](#) which describes regulations in other countries, benefits and costs to interested parties and alternative models which were considered before the regulations were put in place.

[The Industrial Hemp Technical Manual](#) will guide you through the sampling and testing methodology for the determination of delta 9 - tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) in industrial hemp. This is useful to samplers, farmers, and those interested in THC and/or viability testing. If you are interested in how the THC determination is made you may wish to consult the [Gas Chromatographic Determination of Tetrahydrocannabinol in Cannabis](#).

The form for [Reporting the results of Delta 9 THC testing](#) is found here and is mandatory for those cultivating industrial hemp.

What should I do if I find errors in the Health Canada documentation?


If you find errors in our documentation, please use the Identification of Errors form and return it to us by e-mail at Hemp_BdsTpd@hc-sc.gc.ca or by fax: (613) 941-5360. You may also call us at (613) 954-6524.

About Laws and Regulations

What are some of the recent changes in requirements?

The following change was made to the *Industrial Hemp Regulations*, Section 14 (3) in the year 2000: "On and after January 1, 2000, an approved cultivar referred to in subsection (1) must be of a pedigreed status, as defined in subsection 2(2) of the *Seeds Regulations*."

What does this change mean?

Pedigreed status, defined in subsection 2(2) of the *Seeds Regulations*, with respect to seed, means seed that is of foundation status, registered status, or certified status, or seed that is approved by the Canadian Seed Growers' Association (CSGA) as being breeder seed or select seed. Foundation, registered, and certified status are further defined for seed that is produced in Canada or elsewhere. Seed that is not produced in Canada must meet the standards for varietal purity established by an official certifying agency and be approved by the CSGA. 

There are two official systems that we currently recognize to produce seed of pedigreed status:

1. **The Association of American Seed Control Officials (AASCO):** This system is used in Canada and the USA and other countries are now interested in becoming members. Canada is represented by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and by the Canadian Seed Growers' Association-both are members of the Association. The Canadian Seed Growers' Association is recognized by the Seeds Act as being the entity responsible for establishing and enforcing standards for maintenance of genetic purity during seed multiplication.
2. **The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Seed Scheme** is used mainly in European countries, but there are also numerous other member countries. Canada is a member and is represented by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. The Seeds Act states that imported seed must be recognized by the Canadian Seed Growers Association as being of pedigreed status. However, the CSGA does recognize the status of seed originating from the OECD seed scheme. The classification of pedigreed status under the OECD scheme is different (Pre-Basic, Basic, Certified), but equivalent.

Therefore, if someone wants to import or use seed from a particular country that is not recognized by the OECD scheme, officials of that country would have to obtain OECD recognition for their seed certification program and become a member of the OECD Seed Scheme.

What varieties of industrial hemp are acceptable for production in Canada?

Only seeds of approved industrial hemp varieties, which have a delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) level lower than 0.3% in their leaves and flowering heads, can be planted. Please click here for a [List of Approved Cultivars](#).

How do I get my varieties approved and placed on the List of Approved Cultivars?

In order to be included on the List of Approved Cultivars, a variety must fulfill two conditions. First, it must be recognized as being a true variety (distinct, uniform

and stable) by a responsible authority, such as the OECD Seed Scheme, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's Variety Registration Program, or the Canadian Seed Growers Association. Application must be made directly to the appropriate agency for this purpose. Once the variety has been recognized as a true variety, the plant breeder may submit a request to the Office of Controlled Substances to have it included on the list. Evidence must be provided with the request that the variety is recognized by one of the bodies mentioned and that it will consistently produce plants with a THC content of 0.3% THC or less. This request must be submitted before the Interdepartmental Working Group meets in December to evaluate varietal performance and recommends to the OCS the varieties to be included on or removed from the List of Approved Cultivars.

Why was hemp illegal to cultivate in Canada in the past?

Hemp production was prohibited in Canada in 1938 under the *Opium and Narcotic Drug Act* as part of a combined international battle against the abuse of THC and other controlled substances. Although the prohibition was relaxed briefly during World War II when traditional sources of fibres were unavailable, the prohibition was renewed after the war. Since 1961, Health Canada has allowed limited production in Canada for scientific research purposes.

About Industrial Hemp Resources



Where can I find processors and labs?

To find processors, laboratories and suppliers of industrial hemp, please refer to the [industry lists](#) of licensed services.


[Field sampling of industrial hemp crops](#) is an authorized activity. Qualified individuals go into the fields to remove and prepare samples prior to sending them to [laboratories licensed to perform THC testing](#) of industrial hemp.

There is also a list of [authorized laboratories licensed to perform viability testing](#). This testing is a requirement if you are rendering grain non-viable.

The lists mentioned above are updated frequently as new licensees qualify.

Where can I find information on other departments that deal with industrial hemp?

The best place to start is by consulting [The Industrial Hemp Licence Contact List](#). It will provide you with the addresses of our bureau and of the provincial drug inspectors. As well, the page [Industry Links](#) lists the websites of other departments, associations and organizations that are implicated in the support, commerce and control of industrial hemp at national and provincial levels.

Another important source of information is the  [Canadian Food Inspection Agency](#). If you are looking for information on how to become an approved conditioner, an authorized importer establishment, an authorized seed establishment, or an authorized facility for bulk storage, ask for Louise Duke in Ottawa at (613) 225-2342. If you want more information on the Feeds Act and Regulations, ask for Lynne Underhill in Ottawa at (613) 225-2342.

Who do I contact regarding industrial hemp in cosmetics?

For information on the use of industrial hemp in cosmetics and other personal care products, please refer to the following Health Canada website:


http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/person/cosmet/index_e.html

Who do I contact regarding industrial hemp in food products?


For information on the use of industrial hemp in food, please refer to the following Health Canada website:

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/legislation/index_e.html

Who should I contact for issues related to importing or exporting of industrial hemp?

Contact the Canadian Customs and Revenue Agency office nearest you. To obtain the phone number of the nearest office, visit the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency website ( <http://www.ccr-aadrc.gc.ca/>).

How do I become an authorized sampler?

To become an authorized sampler for sampling commercial production of industrial hemp, you must either be recognized by the CSGA or the CFIA for the purposes of pedigreed seed crop inspection, or be a member of a professional agrologists association. If you fulfill one of these conditions, you may apply to the OCS for authorization. A special application form is available on our website for this purpose. For more information regarding professional agrologists, one association is the Canadian Consulting Agrologists Association (CCAA) at (306) 933-2974. ( <http://www.consultingagrologists.com/>)

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[Important Notices](#)