

Why Industrial Hemp?

The subject of why or whether to grow industrial hemp in the United States is often debated yet much misunderstood. The controversy surrounding the plant obscures much of its historical and potential impact – and its adaptability to diverse industries.

It never used to be that way. From the first plantings in Jamestown, when it was illegal not to grow hemp, to our founding fathers' hemp plantations, to the hemp sails and rigging of the clipper ships that sailed the 19th century seas, to the hemp canvas-covered wagons of the pioneers headed west, to the sturdy hemp Levi's pants of the original 49ers seeking their gold fortunes in the California hills, to the massive "Hemp for Victory" government program of WWII, hemp has developed a long and illustrious history in America. In fact, hemp has been used extensively for millennia in cultures around the world and belongs to humanity's common agricultural and commercial heritage.

The seed was known for its healthy protein and rich oil. The outer bast fiber from the stalk was used for clothing, canvas and rope. The useful inner core fiber (or hurds) was used for construction and paper production. In fact, the Declaration of Independence was drafted on hemp paper, and the finest Bible paper remains hemp-based even today. In the early 20th century, some researchers were beginning to look at using the cellulose from hemp as an affordable and renewable raw material for plastics. Henry Ford actually built a prototype car made out of agricultural fiber biocomposites, including hemp.

Despite large renewed domestic production during WWII, hemp's cultivation and use in the U.S. was discontinued in the mid-20th century. This was due largely to misinformed and misguided fears that industrial hemp is marijuana, and hemp became demonized during the "reefer madness" craze that swept the country over much of the last century. Despite easily discernable and widely accepted differences between the two distinct plant varieties, serious misconceptions continue to persist today.

However, common sense has an ability to shine through even the cloudiest situations. Environmental and economic interests are beginning to cut



through the policy murk, and support for hemp is forming into a broad political base, including:

- ▶ **Farmers:** Hemp can help farmers looking to diversify their farm operations. Hemp fits well into increasingly popular organic, low-input and sustainable methods of agriculture.
- ▶ **Reform-minded businesses:** Hemp's valuable fiber and large biomass productivity can help companies "go green" by creating a wide variety of opportunities and supplementing or replacing more commonly used, problematic and stressed raw material sources.
- ▶ **Nutritionists and health food advocates:** Hemp's oil-rich seed has an exceptionally high content of vital Essential Fatty Acids (or EFAs, omega-3 and omega-6) that nutritionists have found to be deficient in our diets. A diet rich in EFAs can help alleviate and prevent many common ailments. For similar reasons, hemp oil is increasingly employed in the natural body care industry as well.

▶ **Environmental, student and community activists:** Hemp can be a key to creating a "green" future and sustainable, value-added industries in our neighborhoods, cities, states and country.

▶ **Green shoppers:** Hemp is attractive to people willing to vote with their dollars and buy products that reflect their values.

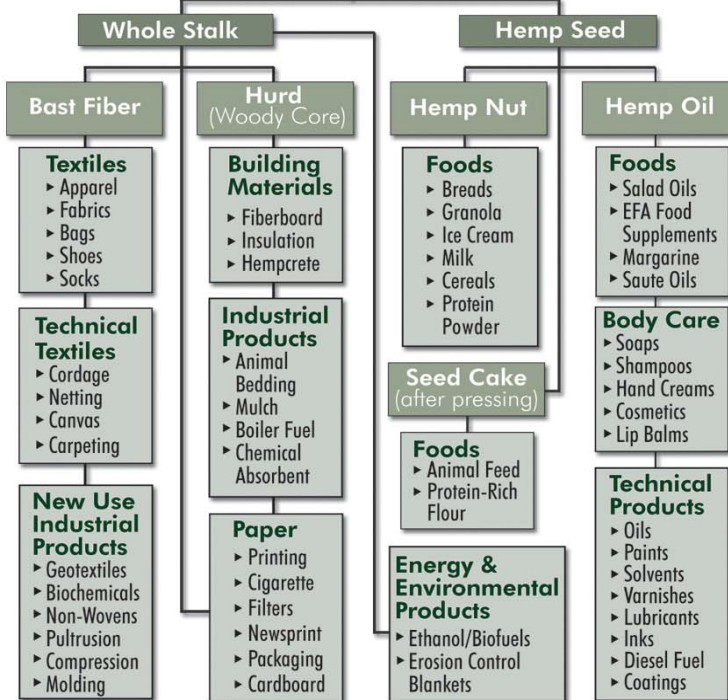
Hemp, of course, is not in itself a total panacea for the social, economic and environmental woes that plague our planet today. Indeed, no single crop can be. But, with focused and sustained research and development in both the public and private sectors, hemp and other qualified annual crops are poised to spur dramatic – and certainly vital – change. These renewable resources will transition our major industries away from depending on non-renewable, fast-disappearing

resource bases to being driven and supported on a sustainable economic basis by the annual agri-industrial produce of the Earth's fertile fields.

With over thirty other nations growing industrial hemp today, and the U.S. representing the largest consumer and industrial market for hemp raw materials and products, we are poised to take advantage of an unprecedented opportunity. Americans are becoming aware of the significant possibilities and benefits that hemp presents. America is getting ready to Vote Hemp.



Modern Uses of Industrial Hemp



Industrial Hemp Defined

Industrial hemp varieties of *Cannabis*, also referred to as "fiber" or "non-drug" hemp, should not be confused with marijuana. Industrial hemp and marijuana are genetically distinct varieties of *Cannabis*, much like a St. Bernard and a Chihuahua are very different breeds of *Canine*. It is not possible to extract a drug from the industrial hemp plant, and industrial hemp can't "get you high."

Industrial hemp contains virtually no THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol), the active ingredient in mari-

juana. Industrial hemp has less than 0.3% THC, while marijuana typically has 5-25% THC. Additionally, industrial hemp contains a relatively high percentage of CBD (cannabidiol), which negates THC's psychoactive effects.

Every other industrialized nation in the world permits the farming of industrial hemp for fiber and seed, and industrial hemp is recognized in international law. Article 28(2) of the 1961 United Nations' Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, to which the U.S. is a signatory, states "This Convention shall not apply to the cultivation of the *Cannabis* plant exclusively for

industrial purposes (fiber and seed) or horticultural purposes."

In spite of this, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) continues to intentionally confound industrial hemp and marijuana. This has resulted in an absurd policy: hemp seed, oil and fiber are all currently legal for trade in the U.S., and domestic industry imports industrial hemp for diverse uses. Yet, at the same time, U.S. farmers are prevented from producing industrial hemp for the domestic market. It is time to remove unnecessary barriers to the domestic production of legal industrial hemp.