



Canada's Agriculture, Food and Beverage INDUSTRY



Canada's Hemp Industry

Hemp has a long history. The world's premier renewable resource, hemp has been the source of food, fiber and fuel for the past 10,000 years. Popular in Canada in the 18th and 19th centuries, the crop became illegal in 1938. Today, however, hemp is enjoying a renaissance and the 10-year-old global hemp market is a thriving commercial success.

Since its legalization for research and commercial purposes in 1998, hemp has sparked much interest among Canadian farmers. The Government of Canada has been very supportive of Canada's re-emerging hemp industry through changes in legislation and regulations, and through the millions of dollars in research and development funding.

Health Canada reports that the area licensed by 169 Canadian Hemp farmers in 2002 totaled 1,558 hectares. Production is concentrated in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Ontario where a vast market potential exists for this crop. For example, hemp oil is considered one of the most nutritious oils for humans as it contains, in unique proportions, the essential fatty acids Omega-3 and Omega-6, and other amino acids that the human body does not synthesize by itself. In addition to having a pleasant nutty flavor, hemp seed oil is excellent for lowering cholesterol levels and strengthening cardiovascular system.

Automobile producers have successfully adopted hemp to help improve their image. In an effort to be perceived as "green," well-known European companies, such as Mercedes-Benz and BMW, now use hemp for interior components, including door panels and dashboards. The US automobile industry suppliers are following the European example and have started to use hemp to make stronger, lighter and relatively less-expensive composite panels.



One of the fastest growing market sectors for hemp seed oil is body care products market. The phenomenal essential fatty acid (EFA) content of hemp oil makes it ideal as a topical ingredient in both leave-on and rinse-off body care products. The EFAs help soothe and restore skin in lotions and creams, and give excellent emolliency and smooth after-feel to lotions, lip balms, conditioners, shampoos, soaps and shaving products.

With other large companies such as The Body Shop and Revlon already taking advantage of the moisture-retention qualities of hemp oils, the functionality and marketability of industrial hemp oil is expected to continue to increase steadily. Increased consumer awareness and product availability are expected to help expand the markets.

Hemp is also being used as an ingredient in beer, and a number of Canadian breweries have begun producing hemp beer.

Additional information

Hemp's remarkable attributes are hard to beat: it thrives without herbicides, it reinvigorates the soil, it requires less water than cotton, it matures in three to four months, and it can yield four times as much paper per acre as trees. Hemp can be used to create building materials that are twice as strong as wood and concrete, textile fiber that is stronger than cotton, better oil and paint than petroleum, clean-burning diesel fuel, and biodegradable plastics. In addition, it can produce more digestible protein per acre than any other food source.

Hemp seed is far more nutritious than soybean, contains more essential fatty acids than any other source, and is second only to soybeans in complete protein (but is more digestible by humans). The whole hemp seed contains roughly 25 per cent protein, 30 per cent carbohydrates, 15 per cent insoluble fiber, carotene, phosphorous, potassium, magnesium, sulfur, calcium, iron and zinc, as well as vitamins E, C, B1, B2, B3 and B6.

Although hemp and marijuana belong to the same plant species, neither hemp nor hemp seed contain THC, the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana.

The bark of the hemp stalk contains bast fibers, which are among the earth's longest natural soft fibers and are also rich in cellulose; the cellulose and hemi-cellulose in its inner woody core are called hurds. Hemp fiber is longer, stronger, more absorbent and more insulative than cotton fiber.

For more detailed information

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Further information on products, suppliers and investment opportunities in the Canadian agri-food industry is available on the Agri-Food Trade Service Web site at: <http://ats.agr.ca>.

Canada's food and beverage industry is recognized internationally as being among the best in the world, both in terms of ensuring food safety and quality, and in providing a trade friendly environment. Consumers are more aware of food security, safety and quality, and are demanding more information about how their food is produced. More than ever, consumers want to know that their food is safe and that it has been produced in an environmentally responsible manner.

Canada's objective is to be the world leader in food safety, innovation, and environmentally responsible production and to be the best at meeting the needs of consumers at home and abroad.