

SUBMISSION RE TASMANIAN HEMP INDUSTRY INQUIRY

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I have been actively promoting hemp to newspapers, TFGA and the state and federal parliament constantly since reading a small booklet on Hemp* by Paul Benhaim** about 3 years ago. It opened my eyes to the vast array of value added products that this remarkable plant can produce. In fact there is virtually nothing that cannot be made from hemp. For example:

Textiles, paper, biofuel, plastics, body care products, animal feed and bedding, building materials (hempcrete is lighter and stronger than other materials, vermin proof and recyclable) car parts, (Henry Ford used hemp in his car bodies and there is a current Lotus sports car made almost entirely from hemp) and finally medicines. It was used in a process called phytoremediation after the Chernobyl disaster to clear the land of toxic chemical residues and has been used in mainland Australia for a 'mopcrop' in sewage treatment plants.

Hemp was happily grown in the US until around WW11, then due to the influence of big business in the form of William Randolph Hurst who owned vast acres of trees for paper making and Dupont who had patented synthetic materials to replace hemp fibres they started a scare campaign which ended with hemp being banned. Prior to this the US and many countries in the world had used hemp for centuries and many still do with obviously no problems.

I have been in contact with one of the growers here in Tasmania for a while now and recently attended a field day at his property. He says that hemp is best grown for seed production here in Tasmania as our climate and soils are perfect and we already have the infrastructure to process it.

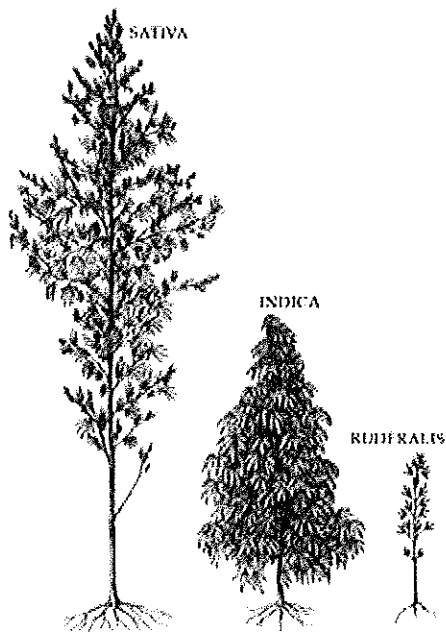
As I see it there are several things which need to be done to encourage hemp production here in Tasmania.

- It is imperative that the Tasmanian health and agricultural ministers support lifting the ban on hemp as a food in Australia when the results of the study by Food Standards Australia and New Zealand are announced later this year and sent for perusal to the Council of Australian Governments Legislative and Governance Forum on Food Regulation. (The Forum) We are about the only country in the world not to allow hemp as a food and considering that it was approved by FSANZ way back in 2002 and that nothing has changed in the meantime there should be no excuse for any minister in the Forum to knock it back
- In the meantime the state government should be contacting other Australian states' health and agricultural ministers to persuade them that this ban has to be lifted.
- State ministers should also contact their counterparts in Canada which has allowed both the growing and consumption of hemp since the 1990's. They must surely have

resolved all the problems connected with its production otherwise they would not have the multimillion dollar industry that exists today. The Canadian Federal Minister for Health is The Hon. Leona Aglukkaq and she can be reached by email at <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/contact/ahc-asc/minist-eng.php> or by snailmail to

- The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, P.C., M.P.
Health Canada
Brooke Claxton Building, Tunney's Pasture
Postal Locator: 0906C
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K9
- The Canadian Federal Minister for Agriculture is The Hon. Gerry Ritz, he can be reached at http://www.agr.gc.ca/cb/min/index_e.php?s1=help-aide&s2=contact or by snailmail to The Honourable Gerry Ritz
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
1341 Baseline Road
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0C5 Fax: 613-773-1081
- As hempseed oil is still allowed to be eaten in NZ, the Tasmanian state government should also contact and lobby NZ ministers for health and agriculture as follows as they will also I believe be on the Forum.
- The NZ Minister for Health is Tony Ryall contact **Email:** tony.ryall@national.org.nz
Phone: (04)817 6804 (Parliament)**Phone:** (07)5780175 (Electorate)
- The NZ Minister of Agriculture is The Hon David Carter contact d.carter@ministers.govt.nz
- **Tasmanian State health and agricultural ministers should contact Paul Benhaim without delay as he knows all about the establishment of hemp food manufacturing as he did so in UK. See footnote.**
- Why should Tasmanian farmers have to grow hemp with a low THC value of up to 0.35% when some Australian states allow up to 1%?
- Onerous rules currently prohibit hemp from being grown in sight of a road and less than 5klm from schools or other public buildings. This is crazy when I have seen poppy plantations in roadside paddocks and low THC hemp has virtually no psychoactive ingredient whereas poppies are full of it! This has to be changed.
- A common fallacy is that illegal marijuana could be grown disguised in amongst industrial hemp crops, whereas in fact cross pollination between the 2 species would render the high THC hemp (marijuana) useless as a psychoactive substance.
- It is very important that the public is made aware of the difference between marijuana and industrial hemp so that you get their full support and this could be done by adverts or maybe on the ABC's Stateline etc. or local information seminars or local radio programs like the Rural Report and Country Hour.
- Page 4 of the publication *Industrial Hemp-Legislative Controls in Tasmania* states that "it is not possible to distinguish a low THC plant from a high THC plant." However if you refer to an article <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cannabis> I would suggest that this is not the case. See pictures below. The low THC plant Cannabis sativa is quite different being a taller leggier species than the shorter bushier Cannabis

Indica (marijuana) The Poppy Advisory Control Board which presently monitors the growing of hemp here could be issued with detailed instructions as to how to recognise industrial hemp from marijuana.



Relative size of varieties of *Cannabis*

- As it can be recognised I would urgently recommend that it be removed from the *1971 Poisons Act* thus negating the amount of red tape experienced by current growers. If enough seed could be grown here to satisfy the demand of hopefully many more growers here in Tasmania we would not need to import it and thus this would bypass the current regulations required by NSUSMP for importing seed. If Tasmanian growers are using only seed actually produced here than surely it could be proved that it has no psychoactive content in which case it could be removed from NSUSMP and hence from the *1971 Poisons Act*.
- Removing all these restrictions and treating industrial hemp as any other crop would vastly improve the likelihood of farmers growing it as a viable rotation crop in the future. With that in mind it should also be removed from the purview of the Dept of Health and transferred to the aegis of the Dept of Primary Industries.

A burgeoning industrial hemp industry here in Tasmania would be a major saviour of our languishing economy supplying many new jobs both in agriculture and manufacturing and considering it has tripartisan government support now is the time to act.

Yours faithfully

Estelle Ross

*Book is called *A Modern Introduction to Hemp – From Food to Fibre* by Paul Benhaim

****Paul Benhaim** at paulbenhaim@gmail.com the author of the aforementioned book came to Australia in 2000 expecting hemp food laws to be approved in 2001. According to his submission to the Review on Hemp as a Food he had started hemp food companies in the UK and was hoping to do the same here. His hemp food product has been a best seller in the UK for years and could have been here if state and federal at the time had not knocked back its consumption in 2002. He is currently Managing Director of Hemp Foods Australia.