

# **The Re-Introduction of Cannabis Hemp as an Industrial Cash Crop in Georgia**

**This report is in support of passage of Georgia House Bill 704 (2015)  
Industrial Hemp Cultivation - Georgia General Assembly**

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## **History of Hemp Cultivation**

Hemp is an ancient plant that has been cultivated for millennia. The Columbia History of the World (1996) states that weaving of hemp fiber began over 10,000 years ago. Carbon tests have suggested that the use of wild hemp dates as far back as 8000 B.C.

In Great Britain, hemp cultivation dates back to 800AD. In the 16th Century, Henry VIII encouraged farmers to plant the crop extensively to provide materials for the British Naval fleet. A steady supply of hemp was needed for the construction of battleships and their components. Riggings, pendants, pennants, sails, and oakum were all made from hemp fiber and oil. Hemp paper was used for maps, logs, and even for the Bibles that sailors may have brought on board.

Hemp was grown in Georgia from colonial days into the 20<sup>th</sup> century and was a valuable commodity with hundreds of uses. (search: "Hemp for Victory!" 1942 USDA Educational Film)

## **Hemp Research & Pilot Programs Authorized in Sec. 7606 of The U.S. Farm Bill 2014**

On February 7, 2014, President Obama signed the Farm Bill of 2014 into law. Section 7606 of the act, Legitimacy of Industrial Hemp Research, defines industrial hemp as distinct and authorizes institutions of higher education or state department's of agriculture in states that legalized hemp cultivation to conduct research and pilot programs. Since hemp has not been grown in the United States since 1957, there is a strong need for research to develop new varieties of hemp that grow well in various states and meet the current market demands.

## **What is industrial hemp and how is it defined in the Farm Bill?**

Industrial hemp is the non-psychoactive, low-THC, oil seed and fiber varieties of the plant *Cannabis sativa*. Hemp has absolutely no use as a recreational drug. Section 7606 of the Farm Bill defines industrial hemp as "the plant *Cannabis sativa* L. and any part of such plant, whether growing or not, with a delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol concentration of not more than 0.3 percent on a dry weight basis."

## **Introduction of Georgia House Bill 704 (2015)**

House Bill 704 was drafted and filed by State Representatives John Pezlod (133) and Tom McCall (33) and others at the request of hemp advocates, to establish an experimental hemp crop in Georgia. 24 states like Kentucky and Tennessee have enacted similar laws according to the provisions of the farm bill. Many states have already planted seeds and harvested crops. The goal is to determine the best practices for growing hemp in various regions and determine how best to use the raw plant. Hemp can be grown in all regions of Georgia.

## The Future of Hemp as a Cash Crop

Agriculture remains one of the largest industries in Georgia. The future of hemp as a cash crop in Georgia could be substantial. Virtually any farmer can grow the plant on as little as one acre or 10,000 acres.

Ancient uses include the stalk fiber for cloth, ropes, sails to use as a food products from the high protein (33%) and essential fatty acid (35%).

Today with technology imported hemp from around the world is being used for such products as building materials like “hempcrete”, fiber board, fuels, plastics, oils, beauty products, carpets, clothing, fashion accessories, paper products, etc. Many hemp products can be purchased at Hobby Lobby and Walmart, etc.

**Q.** Why can we import this commodity from around the world, but can not grow it right here in the U.S.A.?

**A.** Federal law previously prohibited the cultivation of hemp in America. The US Farm Bill reverses this policy and allows states that pass complying laws the ability to grow unlimited amounts of hemp.

### Course of Action

We encourage the Georgia General Assembly (Agriculture Committees) to hold hearings on House Bill 704 in 2016 and ultimately pass the bill and allow Georgia to catch up with other state currently growing hemp.

### Future Impact of Hemp on Georgia's Economy

We can only speculate the economic impact in Georgia at this time. As the industry develops and the manufacturing infrastructure is built, the market will determine how best to use this plant crops.

### Potential Industries Impacted by Hemp

**Textiles:** From carpets to shoes and clothing, hemp can provide an alternative source of fiber.

**Fuel Industries:** From diesel to ethanol to bio-mass energy, hemp can be utilized as an environmentally friendly source of fuel and energy.

**Plastics:** Trends in high end automobile production includes parts made of hemp material.

**Building Material:** From fiber boards to a light weight concrete, hemp is being used to build homes and businesses.

**Personal Care Products:** Imported hemp oil products are currently available in many retail stores. Body lotions, lubricants, hair care products and just a few uses of the seed oil.

**Food Products:** Food manufacturers are recognizing the nutritional benefits of hemp seeds. This high protein/fatty acid seed has become a choice of many health conscience individuals.

**Conclusion:**

Over time, as hemp industries develops, hemp potentially could become a billion dollar crop. Creating new jobs and industries right here in Georgia.

The federal government has opened the door for Georgia to begin the needed research to determine how best to grow hemp and educate the farmers and industrialist about the virtues of the utilitarian plant we call Cannabis Hemp.

We encourage the public and lawmakers to further explore this topic and determine how hemp fits into the economic development of the state.

Hemp is an old world crop that is positioned to be a part of Georgia's future. Hemp will make a come back in America. Georgia does not need to be left behind.