

CAP Reform, an opportunity to enhance hemp varieties

Brussels, 7 January 2019. *The Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), currently on the table of the European Parliament, is an opportunity for hemp producers to increase the tetrahydrocannabinol content of varieties grown in Europe. EIHA and MEPs worked together to increase the level from 0,2% to 0,3%.*

The European Commission presented its legislative proposal for the CAP post-2020 on the 1 June 2018, afterwards, the legislative proposal was sent to the European Parliament and to the Council for discussion. Concerning the Parliament, the first exchange of view took place in autumn 2018 and were consolidated into three reports written by the *Rapporteur*.

According to the Commission proposal on CAP Strategic Plans, the **allowable varieties** grown in Europe have to be planted from seeds with **tetrahydrocannabinol content below 0.2%**.

EIHA would like to recall that from 1976 to 1999¹ hems producers were allowed to plant seed with a concentration of 0.3 % tetrahydrocannabinol (dry weight basis) to distinguish between “hemp” (non-drug Cannabis) and “marijuana” (drug Cannabis). Since then, the 0.3% tetrahydrocannabinol limit value for industrial hemp has been used internationally. The limit was then lowered from 0.3 % to 0.2 %. This further lowering of tetrahydrocannabinol level was supposed to prevent the cultivation off illicit drug type Cannabis (i.e. marijuana) in industrial hemp fields. Yet, no evidence has ever been presented to support the effectiveness of this measure.

A lower tetrahydrocannabinol limit value in Europe (0.2%) **restricts the choice of varieties** for European farmers. Thus, the hemp food industry in Europe has a **significant competitive disadvantage** to producers in Switzerland, North America, Asia and Canada (limits from 0,3% up to 1%). In light of the growing market for hemp food, this problem will become even bigger in subsequent years. Accordingly, a higher limit would set the conditions for the hemp industry to contribute with more possibilities to the EU economy, giving a tangible support to face international competitors and building a new sustainable markets with socio-economic opportunities.

Bringing back its level to 0,3% would allow substantial improvements in the **quality and quantity** of plant products.

Concerning the quantity, today in Europe, hemp producers cultivate more or less 60 varieties. If Europe increase the tetrahydrocannabinol level, the varieties available on the market would be more than 500. These varieties, with a higher tetrahydrocannabinol level, are **more resistant to diseases, have robust fibers and grow rapidly**.

Concerning quality, a higher tetrahydrocannabinol limit would solve the problem link to plant genetic diversity (PDG) by increasing the varieties allowed to be planted. Indeed, hemp plants used today in Europe are the result of long interbreeding process which undermine drastically the genetic heritage and thus, the strength of the plants. **New varieties would mean new genes to breed**.

For all these reasons EIHA and different MEPs tableted amendments with the **aim to restore the former 0,3% limit**.

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¹ Ernest Small and Arthur Cronquist Taxon Vol. 25, No. 4 (Aug., 1976)

Note to editors:

The European Industrial Hemp Association (EIHA) is a consortium of the hemp-processing industry. It represents the common interest of industrial hemp farmers and producers, both nationally and on a European level. EIHA is the only European consortium in the industrial hemp sector. This sector includes, amongst other things, the use of hemp fibres, shavings, seeds and cannabinoids. Originally founded as an association for the European hemp industry, EIHA counts today more than 130 members covering more than 30 member states.