

Press release

European Industrial Hemp Association (www.eiha.org)
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The reintroduction of industrial hemp is in full swing worldwide

Global meeting place of the hemp industry in Cologne in June at the "15th International Conference of the European Industrial Hemp Association". The participants will vote for the first time the "Hemp Product of Year".

In the 17th century, at the heyday of sailing, hemp flourished in Europe and was an important agriculture crop. Almost all ship sails and almost all rigging, ropes, nets, flags up to the uniforms of the sailors were made of hemp due to the tear and wet strength of the fibre. Trade and warfare depended on hemp; 50 to 100 tons of hemp fibre were needed for the basic equipment of a ship and had to be replaced every one to two years. Until the 18th century hemp fibres together with flax, nettle and wool were the raw materials for the European textile industry. Hemp seeds were food and feed; hemp oil was used both as food and in technical applications.

In the 17th century, several 100,000 hectares of hemp were cultivated in Europe. In competition with cheaper cotton and the decline of sailing shipping in the 19th century, the area under cultivation decreased continuously, but even in 1850 130,000 ha were still cultivated in France and 140,000 ha in Italy. When the synthetic fibres came up in the 20th century, hemp no longer played a role in the post-war reconstruction and many countries banned cultivation due to its proximity to the sister plant marijuana. As a result of these developments, European hemp cultivation collapsed on about 5,000 hectares in France in 1990.

The reintroduction of industrial hemp took place in Great Britain in 1990, a few years later in the Netherlands and Germany and finally throughout Europe. After a short hype on 20,000 ha, the area under cultivation fell again to about 8,000 ha in 2011. But then it really started. After 26,000 ha in 2015, 33,000 ha in 2016, the area under cultivation increased to about 43,000 ha last year. The growing areas are mainly driven by demand in the food sector. Healthy hemp seeds have arrived in the mainstream and can be found today in almost all European supermarkets pure, in muesli, in chocolate and many other products. Hemp seeds can be processed into drinks and yoghurts like soy. There is no end in sight to the rising demand.

Further momentum came with the launch of the non-psychoactive cannabinoid cannabidiol (CBD), which has mild calming and focusing effects. It is obtained from the leaves and flowers of hemp. Here, too, demand is high, but cannot be met sufficiently due to a patchwork of national regulations. While discounters in Switzerland successfully sell CBD cigarettes, concentrated CBD is a prescription drug in other EU countries.

Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is approved as a medicine in virtually all European countries and is produced by the pharmaceutical industry in greenhouses. Here, too, has been strong growth.

Hemp fibres are used in large quantities for lightweight construction in the automotive industry, in insulating materials and for thin, tear-resistant papers (cigarettes and bible papers). The shives, the woody part of the stem, are used as building material and animal litter.

However, it is not only in Europe that industrial hemp enjoys considerable demand. Even before Europe, a dynamic hemp food industry with steady growth developed in Canada. In 2016, 34,000 ha of hemp were cultivated in Canada and in 2017 even the new record of 56,000 ha was achieved. This year the cultivation of industrial hemp will start in the USA, where an additional 50,000 hectares are expected in the next ten years.

And also in China, the mother country of industrial hemp, hemp is being reintroduced, especially for the textile industry, in order to relieve cotton production and perhaps even replace it later. In the northeast of China, there are large programs to introduce enzymatically treated hemp fibres into the textile industry. The Chinese automotive industry also uses hemp fibres for lightweight construction. The total area under cultivation has increased from 40,000 ha (2016) to 47,000 ha (2017).

After hemp had almost completely disappeared after the Second World War and with the worldwide cannabis prohibition as a cultivated plant, today in Canada, China and the European Union about 150,000 hectares are cultivated again – within a few decades the limit of millions can be reached!

The worldwide growing hemp industry meets every year in Cologne (Germany) for the “International Conference of the European Industrial Hemp Association” (www.eiha-conference.org), this year on 12 and 13 June already for the 15th time. As last year, about 350 participants from 40 countries are expected. The conference will present and discuss the latest developments from all areas of the hemp industry – from seeds to the end product, and 20 exhibitors present their technologies and products. The conference is sponsored by the gold sponsors Canah (Romania), HempFlax (The Netherlands), Hempro Int. (Germany) and MH medical hemp (Germany). Further sponsors are REAKIRO (USA) (silver sponsor) and CBDepot.eu (Czech Republic) (bronze sponsor).

And another highlight awaits the participants of the conference: For the first time ever, an innovation award will be presented for the “Hemp Product of the Year”. Three products each from the areas of food, cosmetics and biocomposites are available (see collage). Participants select the winners per category based on a short introduction of the products. The award winners will then be ceremoniously announced at the evening dinner buffet. The innovation award is presented by the nova-Institute, sponsored this year by the company HempConsult from Düsseldorf.

The worldwide meeting place of the hemp industry is organised by the German nova-Institut in close cooperation with the European Hemp Association “European Industrial Hemp Association (EIHA)” (www.eiha.org). The day before the conference, EIHA will host expert workshops for members, meet representatives from Canada, USA and China and hold its Assembly in the evening.

Anyone working on the topic of industrial hemp worldwide should not miss the conference. Numerous rooms and professional tools guarantee 1:1 meetings for efficient business contacts. Be there: 15th International Conference of the European Industrial Hemp Association: www.eiha-conference.org

Visuals (free for press purposes):

Nominees of the Innovation Award „Hemp Product of the Year 2018" / Die Kandidaten des Innovationspreises „Hemp Product of the Year 2018“ (Source: nova-Institut):
<http://news.bio-based.eu/media/2018/05/18-05-16-Nominees-Hemp-Award.jpg>

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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, a quarter of the 130 EIHA members are based in countries outside the EU.

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