

9.25.02

Mr. Asa Hutchinson
Director
Drug Enforcement Administration
Mailstop: AXS
2401 Jefferson Davis Highway
Alexandria, VA 22301

Dear Sir:

This correspondence is in reference to your agency's current position in reference to the ban on the growth of industrial hemp in the U.S.

Your organization and its parent branch, the Department of Justice, have known for close to 30 years now the difference between marijuana and industrial hemp. In fact, it is my opinion that your agency knows more than almost anyone else as to the marked difference in the two crops. It is well past time to remove the ban on the harvesting of industrial hemp. In today's era of free exchange of information, it is becoming a blemish on the credibility of your organization to continue to propose that industrial hemp should be treated as a controlled substance. In a time when farmers get subsidized to grow crops that yield minimal profits, average citizens search for cholesterol fighting foods and supplements, consumers are seeking more environmentally-friendly product alternatives, naturalists are seeking tree-free materials, and conservationists are seeking methods of reducing our current rate of falling water tables, your policy is out-of-date and counterproductive.

Consider the following:

Industrial hemp can be harvested with minimal amounts, if any, of pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides, and with close to half the irrigation of cotton, in about 90-120 days.

Pesticide use is on the rise (US uses 2.2 billion pounds of pesticides annually) yet crop losses are up approximately 20%.

Industrial hemp roots grow quite deeply and it is used as a break crop in Europe. Statistics show that over a third of the world's cropland is declining in productivity due to soil erosion.

Industrial hemp is an excellent source of protein and is high in GLA, an omega 6 source, which helps balance the cholesterol ratio of saturated and unsaturated fats. Many health food stores promote Flax and other far less productive crops due to the CSA enforcement by the DEA.

Industrial hemp textiles, clothing, etc. are more durable goods than cotton due to their incredible tensile strength and superior absorption. Due to the ban on industrial hemp growth, cotton, as a rotation crop and heavy pesticide user, has long replaced hemp clothing.

In Europe, carmakers are using industrial hemp as fiberglass replacement in their new automobiles, effectively reducing the weight of the car without compromising durability, and increasing fuel mileage.

Ethanol is a bio-based fuel alternative that as a crop, corn, is not the environmental equal to industrial hemp. Hemp oil was an accepted fuel alternative well before Ethanol in the early twentieth century.

Industrial hemp is harvested for its fiber not its leaves. In Europe, the crop is only allowed to sprout leaves as a natural pest repellent to aid the other primary seasonal crop grown at the time. Since it is harvested primarily for its fiber, it is cultivated at different times of the year as marijuana, which is readily distinguishable anyhow – a result of the height.

No competent marijuana grower would want to see industrial hemp planted anywhere near his or her crop. The cross-pollination would reduce the THC content of the marijuana, and in time would render the crop impotent.

Industrial hemp produces the finest natural twine and cord known to humankind. Additionally, its seaworthiness made it an indispensable crop for the British during the height of their naval superiority.

The logic of banning the growth of a potential cash crop in today's uncertain agricultural future is befuddling. As we contend with 100's of billions of dollars of worldwide agricultural subsidies, it is difficult to understand in economic terms why we haven't revisited the growth of industrial hemp in the U.S. The lifting of the ban on industrial hemp cannot possibly bring a new era of the drug culture. They are incongruous subject matter. The DEA has known since the early 70's that the two plants, although both of the cannabis genus, are not similar. The movement behind the lifting of the ban on the growth of industrial hemp is not a radical one. It is one of commerce, environment, and health, and its members are farmers, health food storeowners, automobile engineers, apparel and textile producers, manufacturers, organic food producers, naturalists, and many others.

I am asking you to review the current policy and have the vision to remove the ban on industrial hemp in the United States of America.

Sincerely and respectfully,

David Mahood