

Office of Indiana State Chemist Sets Hemp Application Deadline March 18, 2019

The 2019 Indiana hemp research program in the State of Indiana was expanded to meet expectations of growers and processors of future commercialization. This expansion is nearing its end for 2019 as OISC has announced an April 1 cutoff date or 100-application limit, whichever comes first. This is being done to help support good agronomic practices for this expanded research year. Purdue University hemp researchers suggest those that plant in April or early May will have the most success. "Hemp application processing takes roughly five weeks and seed sourcing currently has its own challenges so it is getting late," says Don Robison, Seed Administrator at OISC. The response to the expanded research program has been tremendous. OISC has received phone calls, emails or letters from nearly 400 unique persons.

In 2018, fifteen acres of hemp were grown in Indiana for research purposes. This year estimates are that nearly 2000 acres will be part of an approved hemp research program. This research will focus on several different areas; fiber production and processing, CBD production and processing, grain production and seed production. There are no pesticides that are labeled to use on hemp so in essence all of this production is either organic or at the least pesticide free. Research program participants are expected to follow their approved research proposal and the qualified university researcher is expected to maintain contact and review the on farm research several times per growing season. A final report is required at the end of the growing, processing year that will document the research and development of this emerging market.

With the 2018 Farm Bill passage, hemp legalization took a major step forward. States are in the process of updating laws to match up to the requirement so the farm bill. In Indiana, once the law is updated and passed, administrative rules need to be written and adopted to set up the regulatory portion of the legalization process. Once Indiana has the laws and rules updated, a packet of documents need to be sent to Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue for approval. The USDA has recently stated it will not approve any state program until its own administrative rules are in place, sometime later in 2019. Senate Bill 516 passed a vote in February 47-1 in the senate. It is currently in the House awaiting the first reading.

Growers are encouraged to start their business plan for the 2020 growing season. OISC will have licensing applications and software in place later this year to be ready for growers, handlers and processors and researchers/breeders to be involved for that 2020 season. Hemp is a crop that has not been legal since the 1937 Hemp Stamp Act. Building this agricultural market for the first time in 82 years will be exciting and have challenges. Seed sourcing, clone and propagative material sourcing, agronomic and fertilization decisions are all areas that need to be included in a 2020 business plan.

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