

The Benefits of Industrial Hemp

Cannabis Sativa, more commonly known as hemp, is one of the most useful and environmentally-friendly plants ever known to mankind.

The list of hemp's many uses is as long as its history through a variety of cultures. Although illegal in the U.S., numerous countries benefit from its use, including textiles, fuel, food, medicine, cosmetics and nearly all the materials needed for house construction.

Hemp products help protect the environment by reducing dependence on other precious natural resources. This helps prevent deforestation, acid rain, water and air pollution, world hunger, global warmer, and can even reverse the green house effect. Hemp's erroneous connection with the marijuana plant has been the source of its illegal status. Although similar plants, industrial hemp does not contain the chemicals that cause the "high" feeling when ingested.

Until the 1930's, hemp was one of the world's most beneficial plants. In the U.S., many of the founding fathers grew hemp on their farms. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were both written on hemp paper. For a long time, American farmers were ordered to grow hemp to support the country. Although it became illegal to grow in the '30's, farmers again were asked to grow it to make rope and other products to help the army in World War II.

Hemp became illegal for the wrong reasons. As a result of false propaganda, such as the article "Marijuana: Youth's Assassin," the public began to fear hemp and marijuana. Since some minorities also used marijuana to help ease their



pains after hard labor, racism helped fuel this fear. During this era, hemp became a potential threat to industrial giants who had developed a new wonder product, plastic. Succumbing to pressure on multiple fronts, congress outlawed the use of hemp.

One of the most important qualities of industrial hemp is that products normally made from lumber and cotton can be produced cheaper, at a higher quality, and in a more environmentally-friendly manner, by using hemp. An acre of industrial hemp can create four times as much product as that of an acre of trees, and three times as much fiber as an acre

of cotton. When forests are cut down, it can leave the land useless and unable to support plant life. However, harvested industrial hemp will grow back in a few months. This would help put an end to deforestation.

The seed of the industrial hemp plant is more nutritious than those of soybeans, providing essential nutrients the human body needs. These seeds can help alleviate world hunger and malnutrition in poorer countries. Hemp seeds and hemp stalks can also be processed to produce non-toxic diesel fuels. The hydrocarbons in hemp can produce a wide range of energy sources making hemp the leading, environmentally-friendly alternative to fossil fuels.

Even with more than 40,000 uses, the hemp plant remains illegal to grow in our country. It must be imported. Those arguing against legalizing hemp fear that hemp farmers would grow marijuana in the same fields. This has proven to be non-productive, as the two plants would reproduce creating a degenerate offspring that would be neither useful as hemp nor marijuana.

If the world continues at its current pace we soon will have no choice but to make use of this gift from nature. By re-educating people on the immeasurable benefits to this plant, we may some day be able to revolutionize many industries while helping our Earth return to its former beauty and provide a sustainable future.

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