

The Australian Industrial Hemp Alliance (www.hempalliance.org.au) was established in 2015 as the peak national body representing state organisations and hemp businesses. Our aim is to grow the Australian hemp industry and make it a world leader. Australia is uniquely placed to become a world leader as it has half of the world's certified organic farmland. We are of the opinion that the whole hemp plant should be utilised. This will bring more farmers into the industry.

AIHA has been involved in seeking change to the restrictive regulations regarding the use of the hemp plant. Our members were involved in the submissions, with Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) to legalise hemp seed and oil as foods for human consumption. This process took some 16 years and was met with serious opposition. This was on the basis that it would return false positive roadside drug tests and confuse the public about illicit use of cannabis. Since legalisation in 2017 there has been no such disruption and no negative outcomes.

AIHA members currently have a proposal with FSANZ for the green material (leaves, shoots and roots) to be made legal for human consumption. The plant material of an industrial hemp crop does not contain THC and represents no risk. It does, however, contain compounds with health giving qualities. We estimate that the hemp food market in Australia is currently worth \$15 million at retail. Legalising green material will easily double this figure.

A similar movement is taking place in the animal feed industry. Research is being conducted in Western Australia and Tasmania in feeding hemp stalk to ruminants. Results from WA are very encouraging. In trials with sheep, it has been shown that animals are healthy and maintain weight gain when being fed hemp pellets. There are some concerns about the build-up of THC in animal carcasses. The levels are minimal but may exceed the 50ppm limit. We are collaborating with the researchers to address this and will take this up with the regulators. This represents a huge opportunity as the animal feed market was valued at US\$4.449 billion A\$5.783 billion in 2019 with a CAGR of 3.2%.

Medicinal cannabis continues to grow after a market contraction in 2019-2020. This was due to supply chain issues. The Australian legal cannabis market is projected to reach \$230 million by the end of 2021. This is in large part driven by pain sufferers turning away from opioid medications. According to the TGA, in June 2020, 14 emergency department admissions and 150 hospitalisations every day involved opioid abuse. In US markets where CBD is widely available use of opioids has declined, leading to fewer cases of abuse.

The AIHA has also consulted with the Office of Drug Control on the legalisation of medicinal cannabis, which occurred on a limited basis in 2016. The AIHA was active in submissions to allow exports and to change the scheduling of cannabidiol (CBD). In December Cannabidiol (CBD) was down scheduled from Schedule 4 (Prescription Medicine) to Schedule 3 (Pharmacist Only Medicine). Daily doses were capped at 60mg per day and revised upwards to 150mg per day. There were also restrictions on cannabinoids other than CBD thereby restricting full spectrum products. This received extensive media coverage with the public expecting to access CBD products within weeks. To be available over the counter (OTC) products need to be registered on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG). This is a lengthy and costly process, and no products are currently available. CBD is non-psychoactive and should be treated as a supplement. This would make CBD more widely available, more affordable, and lead to an expansion in the Australian industry.