



In photo: Hemp fields like this could soon be a common sight on Delaware's farms.

NEWS:

Expect to See Hemp Cropping Up on Delaware Farms

March 15, 2019 – After more than eight decades, hemp may be making a return to The First State.

Hemp production has been effectively banned in the U.S. since the enactment of the Marijuana Tax Act of 1937. That prohibition was largely due to hemp's unfortunate association with marijuana.

While both plants are members of the cannabis family, hemp contains only trace amounts of Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) -- the psychoactive chemical responsible for the "high" experienced by marijuana users. It is not possible to get high by smoking or ingesting hemp.

While cultivating the plant in the U.S. has been prohibited, many products made from it have been legal for purchase for decades. Hemp has a wide variety of uses from making cloth, rope and paper; to dietary supplements and plastics. It is grown commercially in 30 nations worldwide, including Canada.



State Rep. Jesse Vanderwende

Anticipating that the 2018 federal Farm Bill would allow states to legally grow it again, State Rep. Lyndon Yearick, R-Camden-Wyoming, and other legislators sponsored [a law](#) last year empowering the state Department of Agriculture to establish a regulatory framework for hemp cultivation.

However, since the federal Farm Bill was signed into law on December 20th things have changed. Rather than have each state submit its own plan for hemp farming, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has decided to craft one set of federal regulations. That process is expected to be completed this fall.

In the interim, Delaware Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Kenny Bounds said his agency recently [issued rules allowing Delaware farmers to plant hemp test plots of up to 10 acres](#). The plan takes advantage of preexisting state and federal law allowing hemp research. Working with Delaware State University, farmers will be asked to track germination rates, growth, yields and other data for different hemp varieties -- similar to what they already do when testing new varieties of corn, soybean, and other crops. Full commercial hemp farming is expected to begin next year.

Farmer and small businessman, [State Rep. Vanderwende, R-Bridgeville-Greenwood](#), said he welcomes the possibility of another option for Delaware farmers. "Agriculture is our state's largest industry, so having an opportunity to produce a new crop, and diversify and expand that part of our economy, is good for farmers and good for Delaware."

Rep. Vanderwende said the success of hemp farming will rely, in part, on the availability of facilities to process it and further developing domestic markets for hemp products.