



ORGANIC INDUSTRIAL HEMP PRODUCTION

Since the passing of the 2019 Farm Bill, interest in growing industrial hemp and hemp products has soared. The new Farm Bill will allow for legal production of organic hemp by exempting hemp from the definition of marijuana.

Baystate Organic Certifiers is now accepting hemp crop and handling applications. Producers interested in industrial hemp crops should be aware that the farm bill implementation by the USDA may result in additional regulations for hemp production beyond requirements for state permits and testing for THC levels.

State licenses are specific to the type of production intended and are not transferrable between growers or processors. Hemp operations are responsible for obtaining and understanding all hemp licensing requirements for the state that they operate in.

Regular mandatory testing of the hemp is part of the state licensing and is usually included as part of the licensing. The testing pertains to any part, extract, or derivative of the Cannabis plant requiring the concentrations of delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol ("THC") be no more than 0.3 percent on a dry weight basis.

Hemp seed and seedlings for organic hemp production is subject to the same rules as for other organic crops. Organic seeds must be sourced. Non-organic untreated seed may only be used if a grower has a documented seed search showing that organic seed of the form, quantity, or quality needed is not commercially available. Feminized seed will be allowed as long as it is not treated.

Hemp seed will not germinate in wet soils, and the crop is intolerant to flooding. Industrial hemp grows best in neutral loam soil, so good organic land management practices such as tiling and diversion ditches may need to be implemented.

Hemp producers must use organic planting stock from a certified organic source if available. Producers may produce their own annual seedlings. Non-organic untreated planting stock may be used if organic planting stock is not commercially available.

Weed Control can be a challenge for hemp crops since there are no federally approved materials that can be

used on industrial hemp products. Organic weed control management options such as cultivation and mowing may be used.



Crop rotation can go a long way to breaking weed and disease cycles; however, the crop rotation for hemp crops should not include corn or soybean crops as they share similar pest and disease pressures. Sclerotinia white mold, leaf spot bipolaris, fusarium, and botrytis gray mold are common diseases.

Hemp pollen drift can travel in detectable quantities up to a mile, and CBD pollination can be contaminated by other varieties up to a three mile radius. To prevent contamination of your organic industrial hemp crop, a sizeable buffer may need to be implemented, or barring that, growing indoors. While there is no specific size requirement for a "buffer zone" between organic crops and nonorganic crops, the buffer must be of sufficient size to prevent drift or runoff of nonapproved substances.

Harvesting equipment will need to be adapted to prevent machinery breakdowns. Depending on the acreage and type of production, hand harvesting might be the most effective.

Producers interested in certifying organic hemp production should contact Eric Hanson or Don Franczyk with questions:

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