

# Hemp and the Freedom to Grow

*“The greatest service which can be rendered any country is to add a useful plant to its culture.” - Thomas Jefferson.*

It’s ironic that the country founded on the principals of liberty and freedom still prohibits its citizens from growing a plant. I’m talking, of course, about industrial hemp. A plant that has more than 30,000 uses and is considered a superfood. Even more absurd is the fact that hemp is imported from other countries, but growing it in America is forbidden.

Did you know that the US Constitution was written on hemp paper? The first American flag was made out of hemp. In the past, army uniforms were made of hemp. In 1937 *Popular Science Magazine* called hemp “The New Billion Dollar Crop.”

And then it was banned.

Federal laws against hemp are a prime example of how our government stifles our freedom. Under the Controlled Substance Act of 1970, hemp and marijuana are classified exactly the same. To the untrained eye, I can see how the plants might seem similar. However, industrial hemp contains less than 1% of THC, the psychoactive component of marijuana. Therefore, it would take a joint the size of a telephone pole to get any effect from hemp.

Farmers should be outraged. Hemp farming requires little or no pesticides. Hemp also requires less water than other crops, and has deep roots that leave the soil in an improved condition after harvesting. This makes hemp one of the best possible crops for a farm to put in rotation.

Consumers also should be outraged. Hemp retail sales in the US are estimated to be over \$420 million annually; that’s \$420 million from a product we are forced to import. America is in need of jobs, yet we continue to dismiss this possible market. With the decriminalization of industrial hemp, thousands of employment opportunities could be created in agriculture, marketing, distribution, sales and manufacturing.

The fact that we have to be granted permission to grow a plant is an insult to our freedom. The criminalization of industrial hemp must come to an end.