



HEMP FEDERATION IRELAND

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### Press Release

## The maximum THC level in the EU hemp crop is restored to 0.3 % from January 1st 2023

In October 2020 the European Parliament voted in favour of restoring the authorised THC level for Industrial hemp crop to 0.3 %. One year later, the final proposal of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was adopted today by the Council, following the final vote at the European Parliament on November 24.

The new CAP, which comes into force on January 1st, 2023, allows for hemp farmers to receive Direct Payments for hemp varieties registered in the EU Catalogue with a maximum level of THC of 0.3 %. This long awaited increase will ensure the genetic stability of the EU crop and ensure the competitiveness of the European hemp sector in global markets; the US and Canada already support a 0.3% THC limit. The increase will bring over 400 extra varieties of hemp into the EU seed catalogue. Hemp varieties more suited to Irish climate conditions will also now become available.

Worldwide interest in the industrial hemp crop (*Cannabis sativa* L.) has been growing steadily year on year over the past decade with significant market expansion mirrored by rapidly increasing global hemp production since 2016. The global land area under hemp increased from 99,000 hectares to 275,300 hectares between 2016 and 2019. The upwards trend is even more acute in Europe where hemp production rose from 8,000 EU hectares in 2017 to 58,000 hectares in 2019. Over the same two year period, Irish hemp production increased by **700%** from 76 hectares in 2017 to 547 hectares in 2019.

The expansions described above are connected through scientific research to global environmental policy shifts in response to climate change.

On April 26th of this year the European Commission officially recognised the importance of hemp farming in meeting Europe's climate policy objectives with particular emphasis on EU CAP and Farm to Fork strategies. The Commission highlighted all use potentials of the crop and stated that "all elements are interesting and important to discuss when we consider EU hemp production." The Commission went on to advise that Europe "must be much more aware and understand the links with the positive environmental benefits when we look at the EU objectives in the CAP and Farm to Fork strategy

On September 23rd, of this year, Hemp Federation Ireland formally withdrew from a DAFM 'stalk only" hemp consultation, which removed the most valuable parts of the crop from Irish farmers. In a letter addressed to the Secretary General of the Department of Agriculture, the industry representative body expressed its concern that the DAFM and the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) had operated outside of the law to maintain financial sanctions on Irish hemp farms and businesses, which then allowed the Minister for Agriculture to propose a development of the sector where two thirds of industry revenues no longer existed.

The Irish hemp industry, although small in size, was leading the growth of the EU hemp sector in 2019. As a result of legally and scientifically unsupported regulatory interventions by Irish authorities, hemp production in Ireland decreased by 40% in 2020.

Hemp Federation Ireland welcomes the EU CAP adjustments, which will advance the objectives of environmental policies and hopes the Irish government will support the potentials of the Irish hemp industry with appropriate, science based regulations that are consistent with EU law, and allow Irish hemp farms and businesses to function.

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