

Media Release

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CHC Supports Low THC Hemp Food

The Hemp food industry has been working towards allowing low THC hemp to be recognised legitimately as a food by an application to the Food Standards Australia New Zealand (A1039). The application aims to meet global standards in Europe and North America that already have thriving industrial hemp businesses.

The FSANZ has recommended that low THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) hemp be approved as a food. However, while final government decision is still pending, the Complementary Healthcare Council of Australia (CHC) is optimistic that the application will be approved by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) later this year.

Chief Executive Officer for the CHC, Carl Gibson, will visit the Hemp Foods Australia factory in Bangalow this week to be briefed on the latest developments in the industry. "Hemp food is gaining global popularity and has a great potential for Australia's economy", Mr Gibson said.

Australian food laws are currently under review to allow hemp, which has no psychoactive properties, to be used as food ingredients like flour, oil and protein powder.

Some facts about hemp food:

- Historically, hemp seed has been used as a source of both high quality digestible protein and oil high in essential fatty acids. Hemp seeds and hemp oil are legally sold in Australia for cosmetic and skincare only.
- Hemp is cultivated worldwide, including in Australia and New Zealand (under strict licensing arrangements), and is currently used in Australia as a source of seed for cosmetics as well as clothing and building products.
- Hemp seeds contain protein, vitamins and minerals and polyunsaturated fatty acids, particularly omega-3 fatty acids. Hemp seed food products may provide an alternative dietary source of these nutrients.¹

The hemp industry report:

- Hemp provides economic and environmental benefits for Australia including the uses of much less water than cotton in farming, which could remove millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.
- The hemp industry is already responsible for around \$13 million of trade in Australia with over 350% growth from 2012 to 2013. The growing international market for estimated at \$1Billion Hemp foods is currently.²

¹ Source: Food Standards Australia New Zealand www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/generalissues/hemp/Pages/default.aspx

² Hemp Foods Australia Media Release www.free-press-release.com/news-australian-farmers-benefit-from-hemp-1383276021.html

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Hemp as a food

Hemp used in food in Australia and New Zealand is currently prohibited

At present, hemp cannot be used in food in Australia and New Zealand as it is prohibited in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code. However, hemp oil has been permitted in NZ since 2002 under the **New Zealand Food (Safety) Regulations**.

How is hemp being used in Australia and New Zealand today?

Hemp seeds, oil and protein are being produced in Australia today. These products are exported as high quality food products throughout Asia, Europe and North America. They are also currently being sold nationally in Australia and New Zealand for external use only – as a cosmetic or skincare ingredient.

Is hemp used in other countries?

Hemp is used in other countries, including in Europe, Canada and the United States, in a range of foods including health bars, salad oils, non-soy tofu, non-dairy milk and cheeses, and as an additive to baked goods. It can also be used as the whole seed, raw or roasted.

Hemp and consumer messaging

An application to permit foods derived from hemp was rejected by health ministers in 2002. Ministers were concerned that the availability of hemp foods may send a confused message to consumers about the acceptability and safety of illicit Cannabis and pose problems for drug enforcement agencies. Therefore, the prohibition on foods derived from all Cannabis species remains in the Code.

Current consideration of hemp

In December 2012 the ministers responsible for food regulation (the Legislative and Governance Forum for Food Regulation) sought a review of a FSANZ decision to approve an application to permit hemp for sale. This means the sale of foods containing hemp-based ingredients is still prohibited. In New Zealand the sale of hemp seed oil as a food is permitted subject to certain conditions.

In December 2013 ministers agreed to extend the review period until 30 June 2014, after which ministers will consider FSANZ's advice and provide further direction in relation to completing the review.

[Read the December 2012 request for a review](#)

[Read more about the review process and the Forum](#)

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