



Washington State Department of Agriculture

PO Box 42560
Olympia, Washington 98504-2560
Visit our Web site at: agr.wa.gov
[Subscribe to WSDA News Releases](#)

For immediate release: March 31, 2016 (16-07)

Contact: [Hector Castro](#) (360) 902-1815

Industrial hemp bill starts process of creating state program

OLYMPIA – The [Washington State Department of Agriculture](#) (WSDA) is preparing to create an industrial hemp research licensing program now that legislation has been approved allowing a research program for industrial hemp. The bill, [ESSB 6206](#), directs WSDA to design a program to license researchers and certify industrial hemp seed.

This process is expected to take some time. Licenses for industrial hemp production are not currently available.

Industrial hemp is an agricultural product with many potential uses. It is grown primarily as a source of fiber used in textiles, rope, paper and building materials. Hemp seed is used for food and oil, which can be used in pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, inks, soaps and paints. The plants are also a source of livestock feed and bedding.

About 30 countries in Europe, Asia and North and South America permit farmers to grow hemp. Twelve U.S. states have legalized hemp production and several others allow cultivation for research projects. Hemp was grown in Washington state before it became federally prohibited.

As a cannabis plant, industrial hemp is considered a controlled substance under federal law. However, the 2014 Farm Bill defined industrial hemp and authorized state agriculture departments and higher education institutions to grow the crop for research purposes, when states legalize it.

“We understand that growers are anxious to join those already producing industrial hemp in other states and we will move quickly to establish a program here,” WSDA Director Derek Sandison said. “However, we must now lay the groundwork for the program before we can begin taking applications and issuing licenses to hemp growers.”

WSDA officials will begin the [rule-making process](#) after the bill goes into effect on June 28. This process includes soliciting and considering public input.

Subject to the availability of federal or private funds, the bill also directs Washington State University (WSU) to conduct research studying the feasibility and desirability of producing industrial hemp in Washington. A report on its findings is due to the Legislature in January 2017.

###

Follow WSDA: [AgBriefs Blog](#) [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [YouTube](#)