Tasmanian hemp farmers see rapid growth in coming years

POSTED BY: HEMPTODAY FEBRUARY 27, 2019

Tasmanian hemp fields could rapidly expand to 8,000 hectares (about 20,000 acres) over the next few years, stakeholders say, as long-awaited changes to Australian legislation governing the use of hemp seed are now in place.

This year around 1,600 ha of hemp is being grown in Tasmania, with a farm gate value of AU $4.5 million.

Seed in demand

Demand for hemp seed is skyrocketing and with an ideal climate, access to water and experienced growers, the state is well placed to take advantage of the booming market, Tasmanian Hemp Association (THA) president Tim Schmidt said.

“The companies operating here have got orders we need to fill, otherwise there’s a risk they could be filled by imported seed,” Schmidt said. “There’s an opportunity here for hemp to become a really important crop. The key thing we’re looking for is growers to give is a go and then keep growing it year after year.”

1 ton yield per hectare

Average seed yields across the state are one ton per hectare, the highest among Australian states. Some top crops have yielded as much as 1.5 tons per hectare and Schmidt said there is room for improvement in this area.

“As the agronomy side of things improves and we have new genetic material coming on board there’s the potential to increase yields quite a bit,” he noted.

Leading Australian grower

There are currently three companies growing and purchasing hemp seed in Tasmania, which harvests almost two thirds of all hemp grown in Australia.
As the volumes increase, there will also be opportunities to develop more value-added products, said Schmidt, who serves as the Tasmanian state’s representative on the recently formed Australian Hemp Growers Council.

The THA is also working with the Tasmanian state government to amend legislation that will allow for the sale of hemp crop residues such as mulch.