

HB 2284: Establishing an Oregon Hemp Commission



Industrial hemp research at OSU's Global Hemp Innovation Center's greenhouse on the Corvallis campus



Industrial hemp research at OSU's North Willamette Research and Extension Center with GHIC's director, Jay Noller and Assistant Professor, Lloyd Nackley — June 2019

Background

Although hemp was historically a significant crop in Oregon and later made illegal, recent regulatory changes at the state and federal levels have restored it as an agricultural commodity. In 2019, growers registered to grow more than 63,000 acres with the Oregon Department of Agriculture. In comparison, Oregon annually harvests around 45,000 acres each of hazelnuts and potatoes.

Hemp has captured the interest of a wide diversity of growers, ranging from well-established farmers, to those with relatively little agricultural background. Due to its recent resurgence, growers of all kinds have little, or no, science-based information available on how to grow the crop, minimize conflicts with other crops and neighboring land uses, and effectively and efficiently process and market the various products derived from hemp. HB 2284 is an avenue for the industry to fund these types of research and provide needed scientific information needed to advance its place in modern agriculture.

What is a Commodity Commission ?

Over time, the Oregon Legislature has established 24 agricultural commodity commissions. Administered by the Oregon Department of Agriculture, commissions collect assessments from commodity growers, handlers, and processors and allocate them for the promotion, research, and education of commodities and their products. Some examples of agricultural sectors with commissions includes mint, beef, dairy, hazelnuts, grass seed, berries, and Dungeness crab. The last commodity commission established by the Oregon Legislature was the Albacore Tuna Commission in 1999.

Why a Hemp Commission?

By establishing a statewide hemp commodity commission, Oregon can guide and support agriculture involving hemp, just as other commodity commissions support other traditional and specialty crops grown and managed in Oregon. By partnering with Oregon State University, the hemp commission could support research to increase crop productivity and profitability, and foster sustainable agricultural practices.

A hemp commission would play a vital role in identifying emerging challenges faced by the new industry, and help prioritize initiatives including research to advance solutions. Such issues could include hemp coexistence with other crops, effective management of insects and diseases, prevention of soil erosion, and water quality issues. A hemp commission could also oversee the research and development of new strains, processes and products while supporting trade and marketing activities. As demonstrated with other major crops produced around the state, a commodity commission is a proven model for advancing agricultural commodities.

What does HB 2284 do?

HB 2284 establishes the Oregon Hemp Commission to enable the hemp industry to develop, maintain, and expand markets for hemp and hemp products; and to conduct research, education, and information programs that support the industry. The commission would initially be managed by the appointment of five temporary members, the majority being hemp farmers, with at least one processor and one member of the public.

Similar to the other state commodity commissions, the legislation authorizes the commission to:

- Conduct scientific research to develop better and more efficient production, harvesting, and processing methods, along with discovering new benefits of hemp for public health, the environment, and the economy;
- Disseminate reliable science-based information founded upon the research supported by the commission;
- Study federal and state legislation impacting the hemp industry and represent the interests of the hemp industry;
- Act in cooperation with the federal government programs that the commission determines would be beneficial to the hemp industry;
- Develop plans and projects for promotion, advertising, development of new markets, and enhancement of the image of the hemp industry; and
- Levy and collect an assessment (not to exceed 2% of the crop value) based on the hemp grown in the state and sold into commercial channels.

HB 2284 creates access to research

Due to our geographic location, established experience in dealing holistically with high-value crops, and the availability of highly qualified scientists, Oregon will maintain a leadership role in the development of this new agricultural industry, and uniquely position Oregon to lead the nation in hemp research and production.

“The establishment of a hemp commission will help Oregon compete in an expanding national and international market while also ensuring that the crop is grown and managed in a sustainable manner.” *Courtney Moran, Oregon Industrial Hemp Farmers Association*