

# United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

## **Workshop on Industrial Hemp**

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### **Hemp in the European Union: between moving barriers and growth opportunities**

By

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The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of UNCTAD.

# ***Hemp in the European Union:*** between moving barriers and growth opportunities

***Lorenza Romanese, EIHA Managing Director***



We are the European trade association representing **farmers**, **processors** & **traders** of industrial hemp products\*.

*250+ members*  
*Office in Brussels (BE)*

*\* We do not cover smokable and vaping products*

*industrial  
hemp*

THC < 0,3%-1% by  
dry weight

hanf-canapa-cáñamo

konopi-chanvre

kender-hanf-hennep

# a whole plant approach



Our aim is to normalise hemp use as a **commodity** in the **food**, **feed**, **cosmetics**, and **manufacturing** industry, by setting a **clear science-based legislation**, incentivising **investments**, and encouraging the development of a **sustainable value chain**.

**400,000 ha**  
(1940)



**50,000 ha**  
(2022)

**10,000 ha**  
(1960- 2000)



*Synthetic fibres* replaced natural fibres, and Cannabis plant was *demonised* by public policies, resulting in a **huge decrease** of hemp production in Europe

# ***bioeconomy***

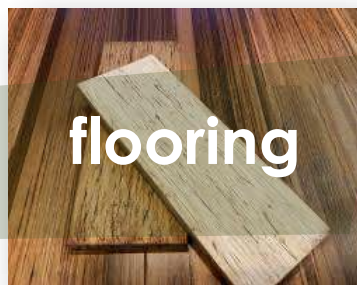
Bioeconomy products are the **most promising** applications with the **biggest output markets** in perspective...



- *EU non-wovens turnover in 2019:*  
**EUR 9,178 million.** *Source: Edana*
- *Global Natural fibre market in 2019:*  
**USD 60,000 million.** *Source: DNFI*
- *Global Synthetic fibre market in 2019:*  
**USD 147,000 million.** *Source: The Business Research Co.*
- *EU Construction products turnover 2021:*  
**EUR 800,000 million.** *Source: EU Commission.*



Hemp as **construction material** is the most versatile material, with a *carbon storage* over a long period (50+years), one of the most advanced hemp applications with the *greatest benefits* (reduced energy costs, better air quality, mold resistance, ...).



# *How to develop hemp bioeconomy?*

## *Positive policy framework*

**Increase  
hemp  
production**

**Set up more  
stalk  
processing  
lines**

**Build consumers  
markets**

# seeds



- Increasing consumer interest for alternative plant derived food > **expanding markets**.
- One of the **best seeds** in terms of fatty acid balance and protein content (**protein strategy**).
- Finally a **common maximum THC limit (traces)** for seed derived food established for the whole EU > facilitating investments.

**feed**



- Perfect for **organic feed** and highly sustainable (use of byproducts).
- **Maximum levels** for THC should be soon established (although too low).
- Many **ongoing** (and promising) **research** projects on the cannabinoid effect on animals (US and Europe).
- In the EU hemp extracts are considered as feed **additives** (: marketing authorisation required), while most of other hemp products are feed **materials**.

# ***extracts***

The **flowers and leaves**  
of an agricultural crop (***Cannabis sativa L.***)  
are used for the production of **extracts/CBD**



! Diluted in a vegetable carrier  
(usually hempseed oil)



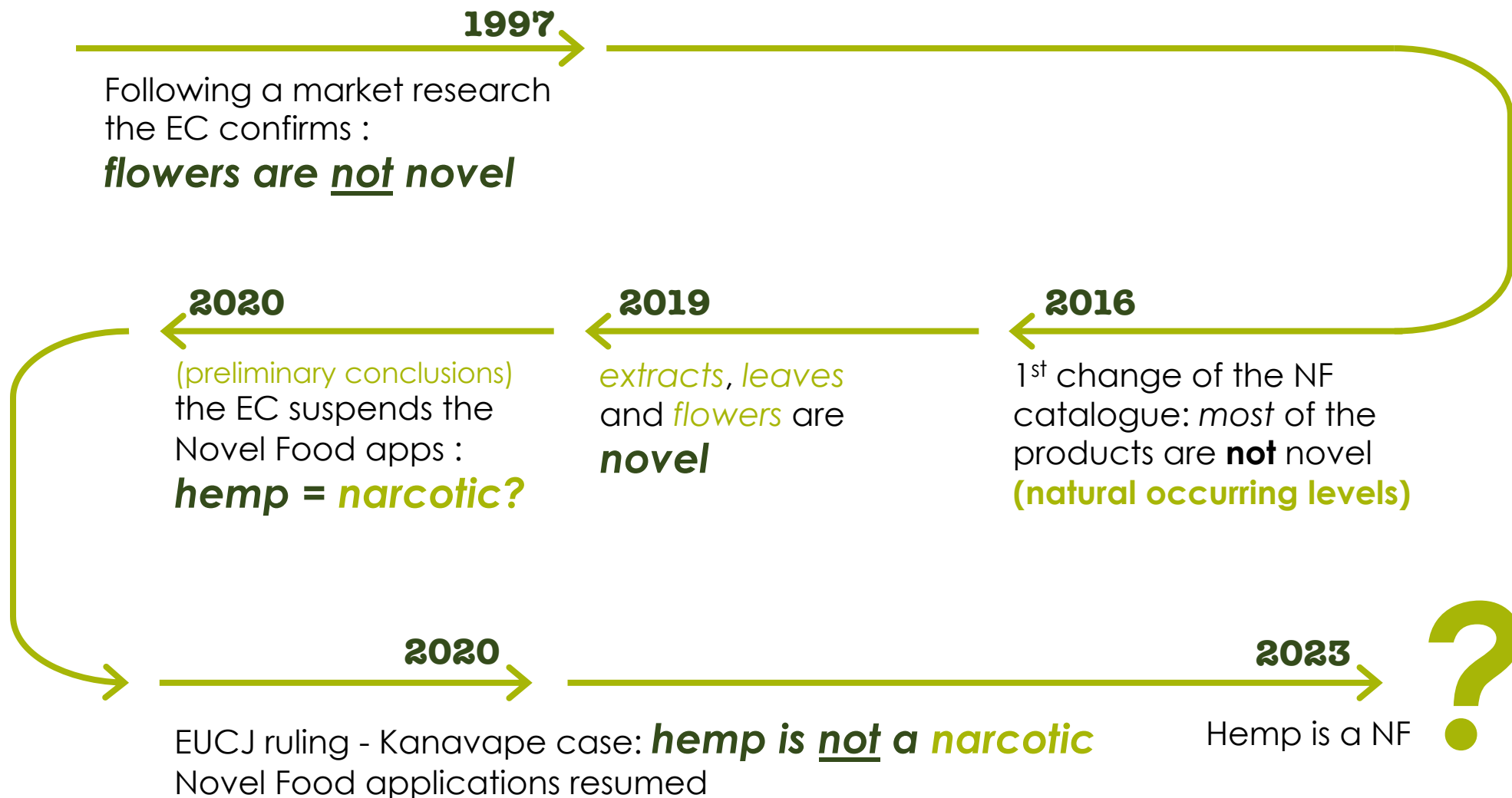


**CBD, most naturally abundant cannabinoid in the hemp plant** (isolate, full spectrum extracts or synthetic) is considered (today) in the European Union as **Novel Food**

: Products undergo an **authorisation** process, aimed at assessing their safety of use, before they are marketed.

In order to share the costs (3,5M euros) of the **tox** and **clinical** studies, EIHA created a consortium and is undergoing the process on behalf of its members. The results will bring a clear **Acceptable Daily Intake**, as for any other food supplement.

# Too many regulatory changes...



In the framework of the Novel Food Application the EIHA is performing...

**Tox study on CBD isolate and full spectrum** on rats (with Eurofins) 1,9M€

- Objective: derive the **ADI**, the **NOAEL** and the **LOAEL** for **CBD**.
- Status: CBD isolate completed / full spectrum ongoing (ready Q1.2023)

**THC clinical trial** on 400 humans (with Opis) 1,6M€

- Objective: establish the **ARfD** of 7µg/kg BW (today EFSA opinion 2015 says 1 µg/kg BW), derive a proper **NOAEL** and **LOAEL** for THC
- Status: started in June 2023 (Q1.2024)



The results for the **isolate** show the following ...

- **Effects** have been registered on **four organs**.  
**These effects are NOT adverse!**
- The **NOAEL** is **lower** than initially expected and than existing literature.
- The inferred **ADI** is of **17.5 mg/day** of CBD expressed in CBD equivalent (it was proposed to EFSA + FSA)



raw/regular  
extract



gold  
extract

Waiting for **full spectrum**...

## *Regulatory hurdles...*

- ! The **farming and processing of the whole plant**, including the flowers, need to be clearly **authorised**.



Hemp flowers are clearly **excluded** from the **1961 UN Single Convention**, as they have no intoxicating effect.

Flowers are already legal in...



- **Optimism** about the future of the sector (*carbon storage, biobased products, plant based food*).
- Need for support of **public policies** and **science**.
- Encourage **investments** and **long term vision**.
- Help structuring the **value chain**, encourage cooperation and training.
- Allow **whole plant approach** for more economic and environmental sustainability.
- Recognise the **exclusion of hemp from SC61**