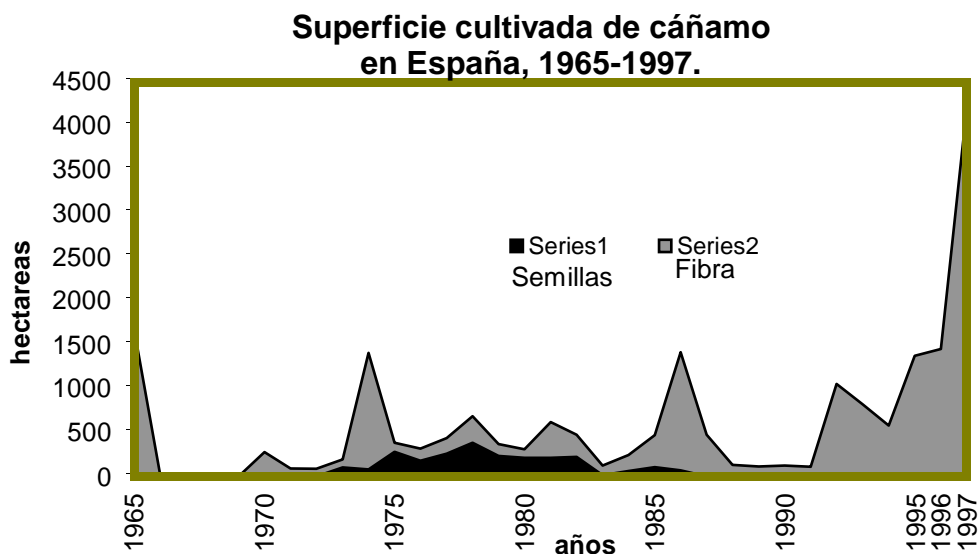


## **INDUSTRIAL HEMP IN SPAIN: HISTORY AND NEWS**

Industrial hemp returns to grow strongly in Spain, where a resurgence of its cultivation is taking place. This plant already grew wild, and was cultivated, in many parts of the planet long before there were laws regulating its cultivation.

The cultivation of industrial hemp in Spain, has a tradition of several centuries of antiquity. Its cultivation dates back to the time of Carlos III (SVIII), where the cultivation of it was carried out in the plains of Granada and Segura. In fact, Spain is the only Western country in Europe - along with France - where hemp has never been grown for much of the twentieth century, until it almost disappeared in 1972; being only about 85 hectares of cultivation, located in the northeast of the peninsula. In 1997 other Spanish regions began to plant hemp, counting in 1998 with 16,507 cultivated hectares.

However, after the European Union reduced aid from the CAP in 2001, the only region that has continued to grow industrial hemp is Catalonia with some 900 hectares under cultivation in 2002 (Gorchs and Lloveras, 2002), mainly destined for the industry. textile and, to a lesser extent, seed production.



In this sense, the estimates for 2018 indicate a continued increase in the agricultural area destined to the cultivation of industrial hemp, but the absence of transformation centers to process the fiber in construction products or textiles, together with the low prices of the seed in bulk, they make farmers use the use of flowers and the CBD as their main source of income, but the legal aspects surrounding these products make them a risky activity. The market for hemp products is constantly increasing, especially food products derived from seeds and supplements based on extracts rich in cannabinoid molecules (especially CBD, cannabidiol).

On the other hand, there is a growing number of research on hemp and cannabinoids, as well as the interest of farmers, processors and users. However, so far in our country has not been able to overcome the barrier posed by prohibition, stigma and general ignorance about this crop. Without an integral regulation based on scientific and social evidence, we will hardly be able to compete in the world market for hemp. Spain, currently, occupies the 16th place in Europe in terms of cultivated area.

The limitations imposed on the THC content of less than 0.2%, when speaking of extensive crops to produce flowers, seeds and fiber for food purposes, as well as the production of all possible edible derivatives, is a fatal policy, preventing the free development of an agricultural industry of hemp, as well as the general welfare of the population and of patients in particular. In the particular case of the Iberian Peninsula, we need an enormous effort of education and awareness of the authorities by the current farmers, growers, users and other agents involved in this plant and this industry.

In addition, Spain has the greatest of all the advantages for this crop: a privileged climate, which allows it to obtain several harvests a year. The Spanish territory receives an average of 2,500 hours of sunshine, which is high, even in winter, but also most of the country suffers frequent and severe frosts that affect, sometimes catastrophically, many crops. The distribution of rainfall is also very irregular, especially in the Mediterranean climate regions, where almost all the annual rainfall falls within a short period of time.

According to experts in the industrial hemp sector, the difference between the climates of the northern zone and those of the southern zone will allow us to study how to be the largest producers in the future.

In the north of the peninsula, the Atlantic climate extends throughout the north and northwest, from the Pyrenees to Galicia. It is characterized by abundant rainfall distributed throughout the year and mild temperatures in both winter and summer, so the land is very humid and you can only get an optimal annual harvest. For this reason, in these areas it is recommended to develop a crop of seeds or food grains.

In the case of the south, we find a subtropical climate in the Canary Islands and the eastern coast of Andalusia (Costa del Sol), which is characterized by mild temperatures throughout the year and the absence of a thermal winter. The rainfall varies greatly depending on the orography of the area. This subtropical climate allows to obtain two optimal harvests, and even more, and usually these crops are destined to paper fiber or cellulose for paper as well as food grains; although, lately its main destiny is the production of flower as raw material for the extraction of CBD.

Article written by: Jesús Díaz. Ingeniero Técnico Agrícola.

On the other hand, the different initiatives related to this industry face difficulties such as the absence of methods of cultivation, harvest, processing and specific equipment. Likewise, the production and processing of industrial hemp products in Spain is clearly lower than the European average, despite being in the lead in the research aspect and the excellent soil-climatic conditions.

To conclude, in spite of the different advances that the Spanish agri-food sector has undergone in the last decades in terms of legislation, it is important to highlight that commercial exploitation (profitable investment in cultivation, harvesting and processing) is not an easy task neither much less, and the absence of effective regulation by the state (both from the agricultural and health point of view) puts farmers, producers and processors of products derived from hemp in a clear position of inferiority with respect to their European counterparts.

Everything adds up when it comes to bringing hemp and its derivatives to the small farmer, to the entities of our country and to the public that, in one way or another, sees in the hemp a new superfood. With this concern emerges the Expocáñamo event in Seville, an ideal place for its climate and where hemp can become a strong alternative within the already established cereal industry. This event aims to be a meeting place for professionals, both national and international, of hemp, with a specific part of it dedicated solely to the industry and where products related to food, health, textiles, bioconstruction and / or any new product or machinery that serves for the cultivation or manufacture of fiber.

This event also contains the second edition of the International Cannabis Forum and its Applications, where hemp projects will be presented, giving the winner a cash prize of € 1,000 to continue with his research. The jury will be composed of agricultural experts and / or professionals in the sector, such as Jesús Díaz, Agricultural Technical Engineer, with an expanding company called Dana Agronomics, who has very kindly contributed all the relevant data in this article on the evolution of hemp cultivation in our country.

The event will take place in FIBES (Palace of Exhibitions and Congresses of Seville), during the days 11, 12 and 13 of May. If you are a professional in the hemp sector and you are interested in attending the event, the term for accreditation is open until Thursday, May 3, 2018, by entering the website [www.expocanamo.com](http://www.expocanamo.com).