



**Shaking its seedy past.** *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, Jan 29 1996, by Ted Appel.

Subhead: Industrial-grade hemp generating business surge

It's no pipe dream: Hemp, the clean-and sober cousin of marijuana, is becoming big business. Again.

Used for centuries to make ropes and paper, hemp is starting to shake its seedy reputation in the United States. Demand for products made with industrial-grade hemp is getting, well, higher and higher.

A dozen or so companies have sprung up in Sonoma County over the last five years to manufacture everything from clothing to cosmetics to cheese made from industrial-grade hemp. Most are small and operate out of a house, but several export their products and generate hundreds of thousands of dollars in sales annually.

Nationwide, the number of manufacturers, importers and retailers focusing on hemp products has grown from 15 in 1992 to more than 300 today, said Mari Kane, publisher of *HempWorld* magazine in Sebastopol.

"There are a lot of *Fortune 500* companies that are jumping on the hemp bandwagon," Kane said.

Last month, Adidas released a tennis shoe made out of hemp. Designer Calvin Klein uses hemp fabric to make bed linens, while Ralph Lauren uses the fiber to make clothes, Kane said. International Paper, which owns Masonite, is trying to make fiberboard with hemp in its research labs, she said.

On the retail side, 10 new hemp shops are opening every month in the United States, Kane said. Her bimonthly magazine, which has covered the industrial-grade hemp business for the last two years and has a circulation of 6,000, will release an international directory of hemp business in February.

What's the buzz all about?

Advocates say there are thousands of potential uses for hemp, which was reportedly grown by George Washington and Thomas Jefferson for its fiber and was a legal cash crop in the United States until cultivation was essentially banned in 1937.

A story in *Popular Mechanics* magazine the following year concluded "Over 25,000 products can be manufactured from hemp, from cellophane to dynamite.

Just don't try to smoke it.

Yes, hemp is another name for *Cannabis sativa*, an illegal drug better known as marijuana. But industrial grade strains of hemp contain only trace amounts of THC, or tetrahydrocannabinol, the psychoactive chemical in marijuana.

“Hemp won’t get you high, and marijuana is not good for clothing,” said Richard Rose, president of Sharon’s Finest, a Santa Rosa health food company that makes cheese and veggie burgers from hemp seeds.

Sharon’s Finest, which made *Inc.* magazine’s list of the 500 fastest-growing companies in 1993, created the single biggest selling hemp product in the United States: HempRella, a cheese-like tofu product introduced in 1994. Last June, the company rolled out its Hempeh Burger, a veggie burger made with whole hemp seeds.

Imports from China

Sharon’s Finest, which rang up around \$3 million in sales last year according to Rose, imports hemp seeds from China to a production plant in Canada. Under strict import laws, the seeds must be steamed upon arrival until they are sterilized, preventing them from sprouting and growing. The company then processes the hemp seeds into food products, similar to the way it processes soybeans. The products are sold in health food stores across the U.S. and Canada.

Rose expects sales of his hemp products will grow at triple-digit rates for the next three years and put his 9-year-old company back on the *Inc.* list. Over the next two months, Rose plans to open a production facility in England in a joint venture targeting European markets. This spring, the company plans to release two new products made from hemp seeds: HempScream, a soft-serve frozen desert, and a powdered “milk.”

The mother of the hemp industry in Sonoma County is Carol Miller, who started making cosmetics with hemp seed oil in 1990. She said her Cazadero business, Hemp Essentials, increased sales 50 percent last year to \$60,000.

Miller’s products, which retail for \$3 to \$30, include lip balm and gloss, soap, eye shadow, lotion, moisturizing cream, massage butter and facial scrub. Hemp seed oil contains three essential fatty acids which the body cannot manufacture but are needed for it to stay healthy, Miller said.

Available in Santa Rosa

“It is sort of like a vegetarian cod liver oil,” said Miller, who sells her products in the United States and exports to Canada and New Zealand. In Sonoma County, her products are available at the Community Market in Santa Rosa and the Cazadero General Store.

Clothing designers have been the biggest users of industrial-grade hemp in the United States since the industry began to re-emerge in this country in the late 1980s, said Kane at *HempWorld*.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, which had been purchasing large amounts of hemp fabric to clothe its army, left Eastern European hemp producers without a market almost overnight, Kane said.

“At that point, they started looking to the west for their hemp market -- and they found it,” Kane said.

Sold internationally

Mindful Products, an apparel company in Sonoma owned by Max Salkin and Yoon Kwon, imports hemp fabric from China to make their “YOON-A-VERSE” line of clothes and footwear. The company designs its clothes and contracts production out to garment makers in San Francisco. The clothes, which retail from \$58 to \$110, are sold at 250 stores internationally including Pastoreale in Santa Rosa and Mama Luna in Sebastopol.

“Our problem is we can’t produce enough,” said Salkin. The company, founded in 1993, tripled its sales last year to around \$200,000, he said.

Hemp is more than 30 percent stronger than cotton and is grown without pesticides, Salkin said. Some of Mindful Product’s clothes are made from 100 percent hemp fabric, while others are made from a blend of hemp and silk.

Inevitably, Salkin gets asked that one dopey question about his clothes.

“They ask, ‘Can I smoke it?’” he said. “I say, ‘You just get high by wearing it.’”

Another clothing designer, Candi Penn of Cannabis Clothes in Occidental, makes skirts of hemp and silk that sell for \$70 and up, and flannel-lined hemp jackets that sell for \$250. Penn and other local manufacturers formed the Redwood Hemp Collective, a group of about 10 manufacturers that buy raw materials and market their products together.

“We want to open a hemp store in Sonoma County. Hopefully this year, you will see that,” Penn said. Lyn de Moss, owner of Hemp Hemp Hooray! in Occidental, makes facial bath mitts out of hemp fabric, which retail for \$7 to \$10, and hemp-covered cat toys filled with organic catnip that sell for \$2.50. She also makes small amounts of custom clothing.

Marijuana leaf logo

Hemp manufacturers are divided over the issue of how to market their products. Many incorporate the marijuana leaf in their logos, aiming their products at people who have enjoyed smoking pot. Others try to distance themselves from the drug, emphasizing the environmental benefits of the plant.

“I don’t promote the fact that it is marijuana, because it really isn’t. There is no THC in any of the fabrics that utilize,” de Moss said.

Sharon’s Finest uses the unmistakable leaf in its logo, but Rose said “It is not a marijuana leaf. It is a drug-free hemp leaf.” Still, Rose said the association with marijuana may be the reason that a major food distributor, Tree of Life, and a chain of health food stores, Fresh Fields, refuse to sell HempRella.

Industrial-grade hemp has become “one of the many casualties of the war on drugs, and very unjustly so,” Rose said.

# BUSINESS

January 28, 1996

## COUSIN OF MARIJUANA

# Shaking its seedy past

### Industrial-grade hemp generating business surge

By TED APPEL  
Staff Writer

It's no pipe dream: Hemp, the cousin-of-other-cannabis marijuana, is becoming big business. Again.

For centuries to make rope and paper, it started to shake its seedy reputation in the late 1980s. Demand for products made with industrial-grade hemp is getting, well, higher and higher.

A dozen or so companies have sprung up in Sonoma County over the last few years to manufacture everything from clothing to cosmetics to cheese made from industrial-grade hemp. Most are small and operate out of a home, but several export their products and generate hundreds of thousands of dollars in sales annually.

Nationwide, the number of manufacturers, exporters and retailers focusing on hemp products has grown from 15 in 1985 to more than 300 today, said Matt Kline, publisher of HempWorld magazine in Sebastopol.

"There are a lot of Fortune 500 companies that are jumping on the hemp bandwagon," Kline said.

Last month, Adidas released a tennis shoe made out of hemp. Designer Calvin Klein used hemp fabric to make his jeans, while Ralph Lauren uses the fiber to make clothes, Kline said. International Paper, which owns Baskin, is trying to make flour from hemp in its research labs, she said.

On the retail side, 10 new hemp shops are opening every month in the United States, Kline said. Her monthly magazine, which has covered the industrial-grade hemp business for the last two years and has a circulation of 400, will release an international directory of hemp businesses in February.

"What's the buzz all about?"

Advocates say there are thousands of potential uses for hemp, which was reportedly grown by George Washington and Thomas Jefferson for its fiber and was a legal cash crop in the United States until cultivation was essentially banned in 1937.

A story in Popular Mechanics magazine the following year concluded "Over 25,000 products can be manufactured from hemp, from cologne to dynamite."

Just one: Try to smoke it.

Yes, hemp is another name for Cannabis sativa, an illegal drug better known as marijuana. But industrial-grade strains of hemp contain only trace amounts of THC, or tetrahydrocannabinol, the psychoactive chemical in marijuana.

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Richard Rose, president of Sharon's Flax, displays some of his hemp seeds and products.

## Hemp wasn't always illegal

By TED APPEL  
Staff Writer

It is almost impossible to grow hemp legally in the United States today, but it wasn't always that way.

Hemp was widely grown by U.S. farmers in the 1800s to produce fiber for rope, canvas sails and paper. The declaration of independence was supposedly written on hemp paper, and hemp sails powered merchant ships crossing the Atlantic.

Later, Henry Ford built a car made out of hemp fiber and other plant resins. But the U.S. hemp industry vanished in 1937, when federal anti-drug laws made it nearly impossible to legally grow industrial-grade hemp.

Hemp farming made a brief return in World War II, when the U.S. government encouraged farmers to plant hemp fields to supply rope for Allied troops. A government film, "Hemp for Victory," even offered a \$1 million prize to the farmer who

## Seedy

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"Hemp won't get you high, and marijuana is not good for clothes," said Richard Rose, president of Sharon's Flax, a Santa Rosa health food company that makes cheese and veggie burgers from hemp seeds.

Sharon's Flax, which made its name as a maker of the 900 flower growing company in 1993, created the single biggest selling hemp product in the United States: Hemp pizza, a cheese-topped pizza introduced in 1994. Last June, the company rolled out its Hemp burger, a veggie burger made with whole hemp seeds.

Imports from China

Sharon's Flax, which raises and sells hemp seeds, says it imports hemp seeds from China in a production plant in Canada. Under strict import laws, the seeds must be steamed upon arrival until they are sterile, preventing them from spreading and growing. The company then processes the hemp seeds into food products, similar to the way it processes soybeans. The products are sold in health food stores across the U.S. and Canada.

Rose expects sales of his hemp products will grow at triple-digit rates for the next three years and

put his 8-year-old company back on the list. But over the next two months, Rose plans to open a production facility in England in a joint venture targeting European markets. This spring, the company plans to release two new products made from hemp seeds: Hemp cream, a soft-serve frozen dessert, and a powdered milk.

The mother of the hemp industry in Sonoma County is Carol Miller, who started making cosmetics with hemp seed oil in 1989. She said her cosmetics business, Hemp Essentials, increased sales 50 percent last year to \$40,000.

Miller's products, which retail for \$1 to \$10, include by hair and skin, soap, eye shadow, lotion, moisturized cream, massage butter and facial scrub. Hemp seed oil contains three essential fatty acids which the body cannot manufacture but are needed for it to stay healthy, Miller said.

Available in Santa Rosa

"It is sort of like a vegetable oil liver," said Miller, who sells her products in the United States and exports to Canada and New Zealand. In Sonoma County, her products are available at the Community Market in Santa Rosa and the Country Center Store.

Clothing designers have been the biggest users of industrial-grade

hemp in the United States since the industry began to re-emerge in this country in the late 1980s, said Kane at HempWorld.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, which had been purchasing large amounts of hemp fabric to clothe its army, left Eastern European hemp producers without a market almost overnight, Kane said.

"At that point, they started looking to the west for their hemp market — and they found it," Kane said.

Sold internationally

Handed products, an apparel company in Sonoma owned by Max Isaacs and Yves Tsoi, imports hemp fabric from China to make their "WOOD-A-WEED" line of clothes and footwear. The company designs its clothes and contracts production out to garment makers in San Francisco. The clothes, which retail from \$38 to \$110, are sold at 200 stores internationally, including Postville in Santa Rosa and Maria Lusa in Sebastopol.

"Our problem is we can't produce enough," said Isaacs. The company, founded in 1983, tripled its sales last year to around \$200,000, he said.

Hemp is more than 30 percent stronger than cotton and is grown without pesticides, Isaacs said. Some of Mishal Product's clothes

## Illegal

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growing and harvest tips. But when the war ended, the government canceled virtually all growing permits. The last remaining U.S. hemp producer company closed its doors in 1957, said Richard Rose, president of Sharon's Flax and a board member of the Hemp Industries Association.

Today, government officials and agriculture groups are taking a second look at hemp.

A state statute in Colorado is sponsoring legislation to legalize the cultivation of industrial-grade hemp with low levels of THC, the mind-altering chemical in marijuana.

Three weeks ago, the American Farm Bureau Federation approved a resolution that encouraged the planting of test fields of industrial-grade hemp in the U.S. and research into the

economic viability of hemp. The group, the nation's largest farm organization with 4.6 million members, drew a distinction between the drug marijuana and low-THC hemp.

"Hemp is a perfectly legitimate product. It can be used for the making of many products," said Dave Christiansen, director of organization for the Chicago-based Farm Group.

"I don't promote the fact that it is marijuana, because it really isn't. There is no THC in any of the fabric that I fabricate," de Moss said.

Sharon's Flax uses the same fabric to make its leggings, but Rose said "I'll use a marijuana leaf. It is a drug-free hemp leaf." Still, Rose said the association with marijuana may be the reason that a major food distributor, Tree of Life, and a chain of health food stores, Fresh Fields, refuse to sell Hempflax.

Industrial-grade hemp has become one of the many casualties of the war on drugs, and very possibly the

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