

THE HEMP INDUSTRY

JERRY WHITING *for* LEAF NATION

LeBlancCNE.com/NWLeaf



14



MEXCHRISS/ADOBE

How Hemp Can Benefit From the Pandemic

With time on their hands, some hemp farmers will become hemp breeders - creating new and potentially valuable cultivars.

COVID-19 is not the flu. It's not going away anytime soon and when the lockdown ends, we aren't picking up where we left off. Life is forever changed. The question is: How will hemp be part of the recovery and rebuilding? My faith in hemp hasn't wavered one bit. In fact, I'm more excited about hemp now than I ever have been before. IMHO, the glass is definitely half full, not half empty.

No one is going to be rescuing us - certainly not the federal government. We're on our own and we're free to work together.

Fortunately hemp cultivation and processing isn't overly regulated. There's lots of room for creativity and innovation. Not everyone will survive, let alone prosper. Today's economy makes it nearly impossible to run an inefficient, unprofitable business. Weak, unsustainable companies will fail as they should. The flip side of the coin is that well managed companies with quality products have less competition, and are thus better prepared to succeed.

People have time on their hands. Either they're laid off, or working at home without the hassle of commuting. In chaos lies opportunity. Some will turn their attention and talents to creating new things. The lockdown can be an incubator of innovation.

Fewer hemp licenses will be issued in 2020 compared to last year. Farmers will grow fewer acres because the market is already flooded. With time on their hands, some hemp farmers will become hemp breeders - creating new and potentially valuable cultivars.

There are virtually no hemp specific farm or processing tools. For example, there are no tractor attachments or decorticators. You may already know what you want, but can't build it yourself. There's probably a fabricator, mechanic or engineer with time on their hands who can help build what's in your head.

We're going to see people emerge from their basement, garage or barn with a solution to a problem we didn't realize existed. Entrepreneurship is happening during the lockdown hidden from public view. My guess is that work isn't going on across the country, but going on all over the world.

If you've learned something you'd like to share, Zoom it, make a YouTube video or start a podcast. You don't need start up capital, an extensive business plan or a huge staff. All you need is the home office or workshop you already have. Once you start, you may find friends, neighbors and strangers who share your passion and curiosity, and are ready to help. One thing I learned during the #Occupy movement is that it's more fun to play with the other kids on the playground, than it is to play by myself at home. So get busy and socially distance your hemp projects.

As a Black hemp farmer during these ever changing and challenging times, I face challenges each and every day just like everyone else. When I wake up my morning mantra is: "Feet, hit the floor!"

If you believe in hemp's potential as an agent of social, political and economic change, we have the gift of time to focus on building the world we want for our children.