

# HEMP INDUSTRY



ADOBE/STANISLAY

## WEAR YOUR HEMP!

**Not that long ago**, hemp activists rallied around “food, fuel and fiber!” Hemp being illegal didn’t diminish their passion to see the day when a wide variety of products would be made from it.

And then came Sanjay Gupta, Charlotte Figi and CBD putting the spotlight on cannabidiol.

The Farm Bill made hemp legal and popular across the land. In the clamor everyone seemed to forget about food, fuel and fiber.

What about something other than hemp as medicine? What about the promise of hemp clothing replacing cotton? The bulk of the cotton we wear is grown with toxic chemicals, much of it overseas in India, China, Pakistan and Brazil. The clothing industry is increasingly focused on fast fashion – clothes made cheaply and quickly in countries without labor laws that protect workers. Fast fashion is made to be

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purchased casually, worn quickly and tossed aside. The contemporary clothing industry is anything but sustainable. Hemp is known for its long, strong fibers. When processed properly it isn’t scratchy or uncomfortable – actually, quite the opposite. It’s soft and gets softer over time as you wash and wear it. Hemp clothing offers UV protection, and is breathable and a good insulator.

**W**hen grown organically, buying hemp clothes is the epitome of an eco-friendly lifestyle. Today’s farmers are growing hemp destined for the CBD extraction market. The cultivars they grow and cultivation methods they use all focus on maximum flower yield – not long, tall fibers. Until a large amount of hemp is grown specifically for the textile industry, there won’t be a hemp textile industry. The key thing to understand is that hemp needs to be grown at scale to be profitable in the fiber market. Farmers need to grow hemp for more than one industry. To put it bluntly, hemp needs to replace cotton.

Most of the hemp clothing available today is made from hemp grown in China and Eastern Europe. As a result, the hemp clothing industry is small and scattered around the globe, making it hard for consumers to find hemp clothing. It’s an industry of small vendors. Unique and well-made clothing, but without the economies of scale in their favor. Hemp clothing companies have high costs, which are reflected in the price of their products.

Yes Patagonia and Levi’s have hemp products for sale today. But in general, don’t expect one-for-one replacements for what’s in your closet and dresser. Small companies have their own designers with their own styles. Your clothes reflect who you are and what you want to present to the world. The various hemp clothes made by independent designers offers a world of contemporary and unique one-of-a-kind offerings.

Fire up your browser and search the wide world over. You may find smaller stores close to you. If so, buy local. It shouldn’t come as a surprise that Etsy offers a wide and ever-changing selection of hemp clothes for men, women and children alike. Pinterest has pins and links to things you may never see anywhere else. Take your time and ‘window shop’ online.

Your new hemp clothes will last much longer than mass-produced cotton and synthetic clothing we’re all used to. So, think of the higher price as an investment in a stunning and comfortable wardrobe you can wear for years to come. Bonus: You may find your new outfit will spark conversations and a chance to lobby for hemp in a whole new way.

What’s in your closet? What are you wearing? Does it reflect who you are and what you want the world to be, now and in the future? We all need to buy clothes. Maybe you have organic cotton or linen already? Now let’s make the commitment to consider hemp.