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## Research boost for Tasmanian industrial hemp industry

Research from the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) is exploring a new and potentially more profitable way for farmers to manage industrial hemp crops in Tasmania.

Led by Dr Beth Penrose, the two-year project is assessing the benefits of using industrial hemp exclusively as a forage crop for sheep or as a dual-purpose crop – for both grazing and seed production.

Industrial hemp is an emerging industry in Tasmania, and the State supplies approximately 80 per cent of the total Australian production of low-THC hemp seed.

“This research follows on from a recent TIA honours project that looked at the nutritional value of industrial hemp for animal feed. Up until now, this is the only research that has been conducted regarding the nutritional value of hemp for animal feed in Tasmania,” Dr Penrose said.

“We are building on this research by looking at five varieties of industrial hemp and assessing the effects of genotype, grazing time and environment on the nutritional value.

“We also want to find out the impact that grazing has on the yield of hemp seeds, and whether it could potentially increase the yield and the overall value of the crop.”

Trial sites will be established at TIA’s Forthside research facility in North-West Tasmania and a commercial property near Cressy. As grazing of industrial hemp is not currently permitted in Tasmania, the trials will simulate grazing patterns by manually cutting the crop at different heights.

Tim Schmidt, President of the Tasmanian Hemp Association (THA), said Tasmanian-relevant research was crucial to the industry’s future growth and success, and he expected the project would attract strong interest from growers.

“The THA is fully committed to supporting all research efforts that increase the value of the crop for our licensed farmers and other involved parties, and are excited to be on board with this project,” Mr Schmidt said.

“With Tasmania currently supplying over 80 per cent of Australia’s hemp seed for food, and having assisted in establishing a good industry foundation in the State, the THA is pleased to be able to support TIA and UTAS with growers funds to conduct new relevant research for the industry which will help foster a profitable industrial hemp industry for Tasmanian farmers.”

The project is funded by AgriFutures and the Tasmanian Industrial Hemp Association. TIA is a joint venture of the University of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Government.

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