

St. Thomas company hopes to sign up hemp growers

GreenLeaf Productions plans to distill CBD oil from hemp for the surging medical demand



in tapping the export market for CBD as long as cannabis remains illegal on a national basis in the U.S., Hodgson said.

"In Canada, the whole world is open to us," he said.

GreenLeaf Productions, which hopes to receive its Health Canada licence before Christmas, is looking to sign up farmers to grow CBD hemp and would consider offering forward contracts to guarantee growers a set price, Hodgson said.

"I think a farmer would start off with 25 or 30 acres to make it worth their while," he said.

Hodgson said he is also open to farmers who want to invest in GreenLeaf itself as well as grow CBD hemp under contract.

The price for CBD hemp in the U.S. this year, according to industry reports, has been as much as US \$50 a pound and higher.

If something drastic happened and the price fell to just \$20 a pound and a grower harvested only 800 pounds per acre, a lower than average yield, they would still be looking at grossing \$16,000 an acre.

"The numbers are huge," said Hodgson.

A challenge for growers will be to meet the requirement to deliver the hemp to GreenLeaf in a dry condition to avoid mould issues. Moisture levels have to be down to under nine percent and that means investing in drying equipment.

Another worrisome hurdle is the lack of any approved CBD hemp cultivars for Canada at present.

Hodgson said he expects the Canadian government will move to approve some CBD cultivars for the 2019 growing season.



BY JOHN MINER
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London - Mike Hodgson acknowledges there are real risks in his bid to build a Southwestern Ontario company that can cash in on Canada's legalization of cannabis on Oct. 17.

But then again, there's big money to be made for his company and growers if he can pull it off.

"We have over a million and a half invested right now for the warehouse, licensing, all the ancillary equipment. It is not for the weak or the faint of heart for sure, it is a gamble," Hodgson said in a recent interview.

Hodgson is president of GreenLeaf Productions Inc. (www.greenleafproductions.ca), a London, Ont. area company that has applied for a processing licence from Health Canada under the Access to Cannabis for Medical Purposes Regulations (ACMPR).

Unlike companies scrambling for licenses to grow marijuana for the recreational market when it is legalized in Canada on Oct. 17, Hodgson's company is focussed on hemp and the ability to extract the cannabinoid compound CBD from the plant.

CBD differs from the more famous THC compound produced by cannabis plants in that

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it lacks psychoactive properties.

While CBD can't get people high, it is reputed to have a long list of potential health benefits, including as a treatment for epilepsy, neurological disorders, anxiety disorders, cancer, diabetes and as a pain reliever.

Hodgson said while some of the health claims are based on anecdotal reports, there are also scientific studies that back the benefits.

A boost for CBD's health claims came on June 25 when the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the prescription of Epidiolex, a CBD formulation for the treatment of rare and severe forms of epilepsy.

The window of opportunity Hodgson sees for GreenLeaf and Ontario CBD hemp growers is to take advantage of Canada's unique position after Oct. 17 as the only country to legalize cannabis.

There are growers and companies producing CBD in the United States in individual states where cannabis has been legalized, but they face a major hurdle

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