

ON-FARM TRIAL PARTNER EXPERIENCES

With the UF/IFAS Industrial Hemp Pilot Project



Focus groups were conducted in November 2020 with on-farm trial partners of the UF/IFAS Industrial Hemp Pilot Project. Industrial hemp is a variety of *Cannabis sativa* grown for fiber, grain and essential oil that can be processed for diverse uses. This Pilot Project aims to develop a viable hemp industry for Florida supported by the best available information and technology. The purpose of this study was to gain feedback from on-farm partners regarding their experiences as part of the project.

GROWING EXPERIENCES

When asked about their experiences growing hemp, participants reported mixed results for hemp strains. For example, some reported more success from transplant, while others reported more success from seed.

Growing challenges related to weather included heavy rain, heat, humidity and hurricanes. Other key growing challenges included pressure from pests and weeds, late planting and associated quick flowering and trouble planting seeds directly into the ground.

GROWING CHALLENGES



MIXED RESULTS FOR STRAINS



WEATHER



PESTS & WEEDS



LATE PLANTING/QUICK
FLOWERING



DIRECT SEEDS

Recommendations from participants included planting earlier, such as in March, and either using raised beds with plastic covering or growing plants in containers rather than directly in the ground. These alternative growing environments fight pressure from pests and weeds, though may increase installation cost and limit the spatial scale of operation.

Many participants expressed a research mindset by anticipating crop loss and being eager to continue trying new methods for optimal plant establishment and success. They also described a desire to continue working with the Pilot Project in the future.

ON-FARM PARTICIPANTS
HAD OVERALL
POSITIVE
EXPERIENCES
WITH UF/IFAS
HEMP PILOT
PROJECT LEADERSHIP



PILOT PROJECT EXPERIENCES

Participants described their overall experience with the project leadership as positive and noted the team was receptive to phone calls and quick to solve any issues. Some participants experienced challenges due to circumstances surrounding COVID-19 and others described difficulty with the short growing timeline.

The overall best qualities of the project were seed donations to participants, attentive program leaders, support from Extension agents, a clear and quick application process and low start-up costs.

Participants recommended the development of a communication network for participating farmers to share information and support one another throughout the project.

PILOT PROJECT BEST QUALITIES

- 1 Seed Donations
- 2 Attentive program leaders
- 3 Support from Extension agents
- 4 Clear & quick application process
- 5 Low start-up costs

FUTURE HEMP INDUSTRY NEEDS

The following themes emerged when participants were asked about their perceptions of the future needs of the hemp industry overall:

(1) **continued research** in areas of production quality control and cannabinoid content; (2) **reduced restrictions**, particularly the restriction on cottage food for hemp; (3) **market needs** such as finding real buyers for the product and a desire for locally grown labelling; (4) **communication needs** such as developing a group of serious growers in Florida to share experiences, challenges and resources; and (5) **shifting to U.S. grown hemp** competitive with imports.

Rampold, S. D. (2021). Experiences of on-farm partners. PIE2022/23-01. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education.

KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, & PERCEPTION OF HEMP

A Survey of the Florida Public



The purpose of this study was to examine adult Florida residents' knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of hemp topics including the legalization of growing and processing hemp. This study was conducted in August 2020 via an online survey with 524 Florida residents, age 18 or older. This data will aid the UF/IFAS Industrial Hemp Pilot Project in developing its public communication and outreach campaign efforts to highlight the benefits of the project and foster exposure to accurate information.

KNOWLEDGE OF HEMP

Respondents perceived themselves as being moderately knowledgeable on hemp topics but scored an average of 50% on a short quiz that measured how much they knew. This indicates a discrepancy between self-perceived knowledge and objective knowledge on hemp topics.

Most respondents (83.5%) were not aware of the UF/IFAS industrial Hemp Pilot Project, but over half (54.6%) were interested in learning more about it.

HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE UF/IFAS INDUSTRIAL HEMP PILOT PROJECT?



WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE UF/IFAS INDUSTRIAL HEMP PILOT PROJECT?



Respondents were most likely to seek information about hemp topics from the UF/IFAS Industrial Hemp Pilot Project website or through communication with friends or family who have knowledge on the topic. However, it should be noted that one-fourth of respondents were not familiar with the UF/IFAS hemp website.

Respondents were least likely to seek information about hemp topics from local TV news channels or national cable TV news channel.

PREFERRED SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON HEMP



UF/IFAS HEMP WEBSITE



FAMILY/FRIENDS

ATTITUDES & PERCEPTIONS OF HEMP

Over three-fourths (77.4%) of respondents indicated they were overall “for” legalizing the growing and processing of hemp. Respondents perceived the legalization of hemp as slightly good for the economy and good for farmers, but were relatively less convinced that it is a wise and low-risk thing to do.

MOST RESPONDENTS SUPPORTED LEGALIZING THE GROWING AND PROCESSING OF HEMP IN FLORIDA

Key themes for the “pro-hemp” stance included medical and health benefits, the diversity of uses and economic benefits. Other reasons for the legalization of hemp included the relative advantage of hemp compared to other products and a “why not” attitude due to lack of reasons against it.

Key themes for the “anti-hemp” stance included the potential dangers of abuse and misuse and either lack of knowledge or lack of a strong opinion needed to take a stance.

PRO-HEMP

- 1 Medical/Health Benefits
- 2 Diversity of Uses
- 3 Economic Benefits

ANTI-HEMP

- 1 Dangers of Abuse & Misuse
- 2 Lack of Knowledge
- 3 Lack of a Strong Opinion

Rampold, S. D. (2021). Experiences of on-farm partners. PIE2022/21-04. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education.

