

Wisconsin DATCP: Industrial hemp license apps, registration open for 2019 season

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Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

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MADISON – Industrial hemp licensing applications and registrations are now available for the 2019 growing season in Wisconsin. The deadline to apply is Dec. 31.

Wisconsin's research pilot program requires that anyone who wants to grow or process industrial hemp in Wisconsin obtain a license from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, and register their intent to grow or process in the coming season. Industrial hemp can contain no more than 0.3 percent THC, the psychoactive ingredient present in marijuana. The two plants are closely related. People who received licenses for this year will not need a new license, but will need to register if they plan to grow or process in 2019. Anyone who does not already have a license will need to apply for a license and register if they intend to grow or process in 2019. They can do both online, or download printable forms, at datcp.wi.gov.

"We had a great response from growers for the first season this year," said Brian Kuhn, director of the department's Bureau of Plant Industry. "We licensed about 240 growers and 100 processors. Ultimately, about 135 growers reported actually planted a crop. As you might remember, we had a very cold rainy spring, which made planting conditions difficult. Despite that, growers planted about 1,850 acres in fields and almost 23 acres total in greenhouses."

State law requires that growers and processors pass a background check with no state or federal drug convictions. Growers pay a one-time licensing fee of \$150 to \$1,000, depending on how many acres they intend to plant. Processors also need a one-time license, at no cost. The annual registration fee is \$350 for growers and \$100 for processors. Fees partially cover the cost of operating the program.

They must also file a research plan and meet reporting and recordkeeping requirements. Growers must pay to have their crops sampled for THC levels.

Congress included a provision in the 2014 farm bill to allow states to conduct research pilot programs into industrial hemp production, if authorized by their legislatures. The Wisconsin Legislature passed a law in November 2017 that directed DATCP to set up such a program. It is operating under an emergency administrative rule. DATCP staff are working on a permanent rule that will take effect by July 2020.

Industrial hemp was a major crop in Wisconsin in the first half of the 20th Century, mainly harvested for its fiber to make rope. Hemp products today are very diverse, and are available in the United States, but have been largely made from hemp produced in other nations.