



THE HEMP
HYPE

The hemp hype

There's a waft of the dangerous, the forbidden about this plant, and yet hemp is the ingredient that everyone's talking about right now. So what's the hype about? What does this plant have that others don't?

"Hemp has so many different faces. For years, it was all about its intoxicating effect, but that has all changed: now, the focus is on the positive properties of hemp. We are waking up to just how beneficial this plant is", say Lisa-Marie Achilles (Marketing Düllberg Konzentra) and Christian Lüke (head of Marketing & Evaluation Düllberg Konzentra), explaining the rising interest in hemp.

Cannabis, to give the plant its botanical name, looks back on a long career: it is one of the oldest crop plants known to humans. In ancient China, ropes made of hemp fibre gained from stems were in use around 3000 BCE and hemp was used to make textiles over 2000 years ago. The Gutenberg Bible, the very first printed book in the world, and the American Declaration of Independence were both made with hemp paper.

For centuries, hemp was the product of choice for ropes and canvas, thanks to its elasticity, weather resistance and durability. Levi Strauss' very first trousers for gold miners were made of hemp. And in the fashion world, hemp has been experiencing a renaissance since the 1990s: hemp fabric is breathable, stays fresh for a long time and requires less washing. As a rule, no chemicals are needed for growing and harvesting hemp, which gives the renewable and undemanding crop an eco-footprint that is superior to many other fibres.

The world's first jeans? Made of hemp!

"The huge trend towards greater naturalness and sustainability is here to stay, and that has brought hemp to the attention of consumers and quite rightly opened up many new applications", says Lisa-Marie Achilles. "Another good example is the other main component of the plant, hemp seed. For centuries, these seeds were used as a food, but gradually became forgotten. Now, they've returned as a 'superfood'. Legend has it that Buddha used to eat one hemp seed a day while he fasted."

Intoxicated by naturalness

Hemp seeds and the hemp seed oil pressed from them contain a cornucopia of minerals and nutrients. The oil can be used in the kitchen as well as in technical applications and animal feed. Lisa-Marie Achilles: "Traditionally it is also used in naturopathy, where it is believed to prevent inflammation and soothe skin conditions. In cosmetics it is used for creams, ointments and massage oils." The hemp contained in these preparations is not likely to be intoxicating: "There are guideline values in Germany and Switzerland for the content of THC – the psychoactive active substance of hemp – and all reputable producers adhere strictly to them."

The fact that the hype about hemp has hit another high is largely due to cannabidiol, commonly referred to by its abbreviation CBD.



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Narcotic or food? A guide to hemp

- The narcotic component of hemp is the psychoactive compound tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which is mainly contained in the resin of the plant.

- Cannabidiol (CBD) is a cannabinoid that is said to have an anticonvulsant and anxiolytic effect. In Germany it is classed as a food supplement. It is also contained in medicine and prescription medications, and is presently the subject of on-going research.

- Marijuana (also called grass, weed, pot) is the dried, resinous flowers and leaves close to the flowers of the female hemp plant. Hashish is the pressed resin of these parts of the plant.

- Hemp Seed Oil is cold-pressed from the seeds and can be used as a healthy oil in the kitchen, like linseed oil.

- Cannabis flower essential oil is produced by distilling hemp flowers and leaves and is used in cosmetics and beauty products.

“Products containing CBD – the CBD compound is usually sold in combination with hempseed oil – are said to have a relaxing, anxiety-relieving effect, but they are not psychoactive”, says Lisa-Marie Achilles.

For the industry, the essential oil extracted by steam distillation from the leaves and fresh flowers of the plant is of particular interest. “Essential hemp oil is actually the most sensual hemp product. It contains alpha-pinene, which is reminiscent of cedar and pine, and limonene, a major component of lemon and bitter orange peel”, says Christian Lüke.

New fragrance ideas for the beauty world

Extracting and processing essential hemp oil is a complex process: one kilo of flowers yields only 1.5 ml of oil. Christian Lüke explains why: “The challenge lies in delivering a uniformly high quality. The composition of the essential hemp oil depends on several factors, including the type of plant and its origin. The exact time of harvest also plays a role, because as the flower develops, the spectrum of the components in the essential oil changes.”

Essential hemp oil has not yet arrived in the mainstream – fortunately. “This aspect is exactly what makes it the ideal product to add a new twist in the beauty segment”, says Lisa-Marie Achilles. “It is ideal for use in cosmetics, perfumes or massage oils, but equally so in foods such as ice tea, cough lozenges or even chocolate.” Essential hemp oil does not contain psychoactive THC.

Hemp for all the senses

“One thing is completely clear”, says Christian Lüke: “Hemp has finally shed its ‘seedy’ image. It is an incredibly versatile plant and a great rediscovery. I am certain that hemp is heading towards a brilliant career in cosmetics and in the beauty and wellness segment.”



What is a drug?

The World Health Organization defines a drug as a chemical agent that alters the biochemical physiological processes of tissues or organisms. Linguistically, the term “drug” derives from the Dutch word droog - which means “dry” in English and the word is used scientifically to refer to medicinal plants or parts of medicinal plants that can be preserved by drying prior to use. St. John’s wort, camomile blossoms or liquorice root – all of these plants are drugs. Substances that are consumed in order to experience a changed state of consciousness are strictly speaking narcotics; however, these substances are also commonly referred to as drugs and usually mean illegal drugs.

Düllberg Konzentra provides selected essential oils and perfume oils for the fragrance and beauty industry. Contact us for more information:

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