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**Report Name:** Italian Industrial Hemp Overview 2020

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**Report Highlights:**

Hemp cultivation in Italy is legal since January 2017 when the Italian law No. 242/2016 promoting hemp cultivation and its industrial uses entered into force, leading to a sector revival, with more than 800 farms cultivating 4,000 hectares (ha) as an alternative to durum wheat. Approximately 80 percent of the Italian hemp production is destined to the food industry. The remaining 20 percent goes to green building, cosmetics, and nutraceutical sectors. On January 15, 2020, the Italian Ministry of Health published a decree on the Official Gazette setting the maximum level of THC content allowed in hemp food at 2 milligrams/kilogram for hempseeds, hempseed flour, and supplements containing ingredients derived from hemp; and 5 milligrams/kilogram for hempseed oil.

## Italian Industrial Hemp Overview 2020

### Hemp Production

Italy's hemp (*cannabis sativa L.*) cultivation and industrial use dates back to 1940, when the country was the second largest hemp producer in the world (after Russia), with approximately 100,000 hectares (ha) cultivated to produce textiles and ropes for the naval industry. However, the introduction of cheaper synthetic fibers (like nylon) in 1950 and Italy's ratification of international conventions on narcotics led to a gradual decline of the hemp growing area (400 ha in 2013).

The entry into force in January 2017 of Italy's law No. 242/2016 promoting hemp cultivation and its industrial uses led to a sector revival, with more than 800 farms cultivating 4,000 ha in 2018 as an alternative to durum wheat, mainly in the regions of Toscana, Piemonte, Veneto, Sicilia, Puglia, Emilia-Romagna, Basilicata, Abruzzo, and Sardegna. According to the latest industry estimates, hemp yields a profit of approximately €600/ha, while durum wheat generates net earnings of nearly €300/ha. Main hemp varieties cultivated in Italy include *Fedora 19*, *Felina 32*, *Juzo 31*, *Futura 75*, *Carmagnola*, *Vibranova*, *Carmagnola Selezionata*, *Eletta Campana*, *Finola*, *Tizza*, *Kompolti*, *Dioica 88*, *Tiborszallasi*, and *Antal*. Hempseed yield ranges from 350 to 650 kg/ha. Approximately 80 percent of the Italian hemp production is destined to the food industry. The remaining 20 percent goes to the green building, cosmetics, and nutraceutical sectors.

### Hemp/Cannabinoid Regulations

Law No. 242/2016 promotes hemp cultivation as a way to preserve biodiversity and reduce the environmental impact of agriculture. The law allows growers to plant only hemp varieties registered in the EU's 'Common [Catalogue](#) of Varieties of Agricultural Plant Species', as per art.17 of EC (European Council) Directive No. 2002/53. The Italian Ministry of Health does not require any authorization to cultivate hemp plants containing a maximum tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content ranging from 0.2 to 0.6 percent. Growers are required to keep the seed tags and related invoices for at least twelve months.

Hemp-derived products include food, cosmetics, semi-finished products (such as fibers, powders, wood chips, oils or fuels), organic material for bioengineering and green building works, green manure, ornamental plants, and crops used for research and educational activities. The State Forestry Department is in charge of checking compliance with the current legal framework. According to law No. 242/2016, the Italian Ministry of Agricultural, Food, and Forestry Policies shall allocate a maximum amount of €700,000 per year to finance research and development projects related to hemp cultivation and processing. Moreover, a CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) payment ranging from €250 to €400/ha shall be granted to Italian hemp growers.

Although the main objective of law No. 242/2016 was to promote the agricultural uses of hemp, some business operators interpreted the regulation as a way to liberalize the use of 'light cannabis' with a THC content below 0.6 percent. Thus, approximately 1,300 'light cannabis' shops, delivery services,

and vending machines have sprung up in Italy, selling hemp inflorescences and leaves as ‘collectors’ items’. To dispel any doubt and prevent conflicting court decisions, on January 15, 2020, the Italian Ministry of Health published a [decree](#) (in Italian) on the Official Gazette setting the maximum level of THC content allowed in hemp food at 2 milligrams/kilogram for hempseeds, hempseed flour, and supplements containing ingredients derived from hemp; and 5 milligrams/kilogram for hempseed oil. Hemp food products not included in such decree must comply with Art. 2 of EC Regulation [No. 1881/2006](#) setting maximum levels for certain contaminants in foodstuffs.

Regarding controls, the sampling must be performed in accordance with EC Regulation [No. 401/2006](#), while the analysis should be carried out according to EU Commission Recommendation [No. 2115/2016](#) on the monitoring of the presence of  $\Delta^9$ -tetrahydrocannabinol, its precursors, and other cannabinoids in food. Such legal framework is expected to help reduce the risk of potential liabilities and support the growth of a sector valued at €40 million.

Since 2013, cannabis for medical use has been legal in Italy and is subject to medical prescription. Eligible conditions are primarily multiple sclerosis, glaucoma, Tourette’s syndrome, chronic pain, nausea from chemotherapy or HIV treatments, spinal cord injury, anorexia, and cachexia. Due to a lack of domestic cultivation, cannabis for medical use was initially available only via import from The Netherlands, and consequently, outrageously expensive for the majority of Italian patients. Therefore, in 2017, the Italian Ministries of Defense and Health signed an agreement granting exclusive cannabis production (300 kg/year) and distribution to an Italian military chemical and pharmaceutical plant based in Florence. However, popularity of Italy’s cannabis for medical use has grown to the extent that the country is experiencing a supply shortage and is therefore relying on imports from authorized suppliers in Germany and The Netherlands.

## **Hemp Trade Regulation**

In accordance with art.189 of the EU Regulation [No. 1308/2013](#), Italy’s Law No. 242/2016 allows the import of:

- hempseeds for sowing (HS code 12079920), with a THC content not exceeding 0.2 percent as per articles 32(6) and 35(3) of EU Regulation No. 1307/2013;
- hempseeds other than for sowing (HS code 12079991), imported only by authorized importers to ensure that such seeds are not intended for sowing;
- hemp fiber raw (HS code 53021000), with a THC content not exceeding 0.2 percent as per articles 32(6) and 35(3) of EU Regulation No. 1307/2013.

For further import requirements, please consult the EU Regulation [No. 1239/2016](#) and the [TARIC](#) (Integrated Tariff of the European Union) database.

According to the latest figures provided by the Italian Institute of Statistics, in 2018, Italy imported:

- 557 metric tons (MT) of hempseeds other than for sowing (884 MT in 2017), mainly from Canada, France, The Netherlands, Germany, and China;

- 46 MT of hempseeds for sowing (8 MT in 2017), mainly from Germany, France, and The Netherlands;
- 11 MT of hemp fiber raw (0.3 MT in 2017), mainly from China, Germany, and France.

#### **Leading Italian Industrial Hemp Associations**

- [Italian Hemp Federation](#) (in Italian)
- [National Association of Hemp Growers](#) (in Italian)
- [Italian Hempseed Consortium](#) (in Italian)
- [Assocanapa Group](#) (in Italian)

#### **Abbreviations and definitions used in this report:**

EU European Union

Ha hectare; 1 ha = 2.471 acres

MT Metric ton = 1000 kg

#### **Harmonized System (HS) Codes:**

Hempseeds for sowing: 12079920

Hempseeds other than for sowing: 12079991

Hemp fiber raw: 53021000

#### **Attachments:**

No Attachments.