

The market for CBD products is obviously not going away and the demand will continue to grow. Some reports have predicted that hemp prices will go back up later in the summer as the surplus get used. Let's hope. But we need to be proactive.

We can all work together to change this. There are farmers getting together all over the state forming groups and co-ops. It just takes time and organization. We want to save Wisconsin's small farms by bringing back hemp. Our state used to be a dominate producer before the powerful corporations felt threatened and decided it should be illegal. Now that CBD became legal the large corporations and agribusiness will soon dominate the market if we don't support local.

How do we know what is local? Some of what appears to be Wisconsin grown actually has only a miniscule amount of Wisconsin hemp in their final product. Many times the there may be some grown in state but most of the source crop imported from out of state. Likewise it is also processed out of state. We can start by carefully reading the label and researching online. There's a short list of CBD products that are grown and made in the state.

Just because a company is big that doesn't mean their product is any better in fact most often it is more like a cheap cut of meat versus prime rib. The corporate farm may have the processing ability for thousands of acres, harvested by heavy equipment, into huge bags or bales and then batch processed into an average product. If it works for people that's great, but I would rather have that choice steak and locally brewed beer. Local products are made with personal care and haven't sat in a warehouse for who

thoughtfully and comments. Some large company's say they are Food and Drug Administration approved. Photos and descriptions of big beautiful labs and large fields of green are re-used by different companies all over the web. They forget to mention FDA approval has not been granted on any CBD products yet. I would be willing to bet when large corporations and big pharma are ready to take over the industry, FDA approval will suddenly move a little quicker. The small farmer will still be working hard to make it and carry on the tradition,

or turning their crop back into fertilizer. We have met a lot a really good people researching this industry all over the country. There of course are a lot of opportunists from out of state moving into our market, and I have heard and read statements like, "there is no competition in places like Wisconsin," "they are new and not educated," and "I am going to dominate the market." Listening to conversations like that and watching outside industry take over our market is what prompted me to share some of my

Please retailers and consumers buy local products made from your local farms! Local farmers are your neighbors and friends. Let's help our farmers and hopefully maybe their children could have the opportunity to pursue farming someday if they wish. You will be rewarded too with high quality top shelf products at a farmer-direct pricing.

*Bob Pagel of Monarch Hill Hemp and CBD Botanicals in Eau Claire is a licensed hemp grower, processor and retailer.*

## Hemp farmers need local support

### in my opinion

By Bob Pagel

lot of paperwork, licensing, regulations, testing, very expensive seed, long hours, and huge risks.

Farmers are like the gold miners. We do all the hard, dirty work and the broker or the salesperson selling you a shovel most often makes the money. There are a lot of promises, websites, and companies that appear then disappear. It's hard to know who to trust. There is a lot of over-priced equipment, supplies, and seed, some good, some not. If the company appears to be big they may or may not be. Many are operating out of Suite 101, a lawyers office. I know, I have been there.

After many hours in the field, many hours of personal research, connecting with growers, state inspectors, brokers, equipment suppliers, labs, hemp expos, CBD retailers, etc; I have analyzed some of the things Wisconsin needs to do to make the growing of CBD profitable for farmers. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection is doing the best they can and giving farmers an alternative crop to grow and market. Now farmers, producers, retailers, and CBD customers all need to do our part if we want to make hemp a profitable crop for our Wisconsin farmers.

What are the reasons the Wisconsin hemp train hasn't left the station? One reason is the lack of in-state oil processors. Most farmers were shut out of the chance to have their hemp processed from their small farms. So more processors are needed. Also, many cannabis growers out west grew hemp instead of marijuana in hopes of making a profit due to the falling prices of marijuana. Many other states legalized the cultivation of hemp. The result of this surplus resulted in much lower valuation of the crop and prices plummeted.

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Did you know most CBD products purchased in Wisconsin are not from Wisconsin?

According to the December 2019 U.S. Department of Agriculture harvest report, 94% of Wisconsin grown CBD hemp had not been sold. Our farmers have lost hundreds of thousands of dollars and stand to lose much more. Most farmers are still sitting on their crop.

I believe through more hard work, retail support, and perseverance we can make this a successful crop.

Most CBD retailers in Wisconsin are selling products grown and made out of state and country. In my research, it is actually hard to find a store with CBD products grown and processed here. Sometimes the products are labeled as though they are local. Quite often they are from out of state franchises and investors who came here to capitalize on our new market. Business people from other states with more experience and capital in this industry are busily taking advantage and moving into new markets here. I have no problem with ambitious people and also don't blame retailers who are selling their products because retailers are selling CBD products that were available at the time they got into this business. Now it's time they start selling our local products.

Spring is always an exciting time for everyone and a busy one for farmers. Times were different this year but we will get through this and it's time to enjoy the sunshine and great outdoors.

But when it came to planting spring crops, Wisconsin's lightly seasoned CBD farmers and new CBD farmers were left wondering how much hemp was worth the risk of planting. Some are entering this new market in hopes to earn a living, some to hopefully keep their farm, some to enjoy the plant and its many benefits and many of us all of the above! Farming is a busy life. Hemp, like other crops or farm products, has a