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## **Industrial Hemp Commission seeks N.C. attorney general's office's help in resolving issue for growers to legally obtain hemp seed for 2017 season**

### **Statement from Industrial Hemp Commission Chairman Dr. Tom Melton:**

"Following a closed-session meeting with its attorney, the Industrial Hemp Commission on Wednesday voted to send a letter to the attorney general's office that would seek to help growers resolve the issue of legally obtaining hemp seed for the 2017 growing season. I cannot go into the details of the letter, but commission members recognized that time is of the essence as the growing season for the crop is rapidly approaching. The letter has been delivered."

### **Background:**

The 2014 Farm Bill enabled universities and state departments of agriculture across the U.S. to grow industrial hemp as part of an agricultural research pilot program. The N.C. General Assembly passed enabling legislation in 2015, allowing the creation of the Industrial Hemp Commission to develop the rules and licensing structure necessary to stay within federal laws. The commission set up the application requirements and process to implement the pilot program for the 2017 season.

There is no industrial hemp planting seed in North Carolina because the crop hasn't been grown in the state for decades, but seed is available internationally and domestically.

Obtaining industrial hemp seed internationally requires a U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency import permit. On the domestic front, the DEA in August 2016 issued a Statement of Principles on industrial hemp indicating the movement of industrial hemp seeds across state lines is illegal. However, Congress has passed legislation which would prevent DEA from expending federal funds in contravention of a state's legal industrial hemp pilot program.

Based on that Statement of Principles, applications to the Industrial Hemp Commission from North Carolina growers who want to source domestic seed have been tabled by the commission until there is clarity on the federal law and whether farmers would be in violation of it.