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## The WVDA Releases Numbers for Industrial Hemp

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**CHARLESTON, W.Va.** – For the 2019 growing season, the West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) issued 158 individual licenses under the industrial hemp program. This included 71 applicants who marked processing as part of their submission. The proposed total acreage to be grown by licensees is 2,531.

“It is obvious West Virginia farmers are excited to tap into this new, legal cash crop. It is great to see a large majority of applicants have shown some interest in becoming a processor. Taking raw materials and adding value to them will help West Virginia’s industry thrive,” said Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt.

In 2018, West Virginia licensed 46 industrial hemp growers who grew roughly 155 acres of crop. During the 2019 application period, the WVDA saw a 300 percent increase in applicants versus the previous year. This increased interest is largely due to legislation that was passed by the West Virginia Legislature in 2017 which allow cultivation of industrial hemp for commercial purposes and a growing national interest. This is the second growing season under the new law.

On December 20, 2018, President Trump signed the 2018 Farm Bill which included a provision to legalize the commercial cultivation of industrial hemp. The bill removed industrial hemp from the list of federally controlled substances while clarifying industrial hemp producers may participate in United States Department of Agriculture programs.

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“We are still in a holding pattern until more federal guidelines are released this fall, but at least we know West Virginia is ahead of the game on this emerging industry. We will update our law to respond to any changes in policy or regulation from our federal partners once more information is released,” Leonhardt said.

Oversight to regulate cultivation will continue to rest with individual state departments of agriculture upon approval by USDA. State pilot projects are to operate under existing rules until the USDA issues rules and regulations sometime this fall.

For the complete list of industrial hemp licenses click [here](#)

For more information or questions, contact Crescent Gallagher at [cgallagher@wvda.us](mailto:cgallagher@wvda.us) or 304-558-3708.

*The West Virginia Department of Agriculture protects plant, animal and human health through a variety of scientific, regulatory and consumer protection programs. The Commissioner of Agriculture is one of six statewide elected officials who sits on the Board of Public Works.*

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