



Photos by George Plaven/Capital Press

Adam Kurtz, who owns Oregon Fusion with business partner Ed McCauley, checks young potted hemp plants at one of the company's greenhouses near Boring, Ore.



Cannabinoid, or CBD, oil is one of the main products driving interest in growing hemp in Oregon and Washington. Hemp can also be used in different food products, fiber and building materials.

A NEW HOPE FOR HEMP

Congress considers legalizing versatile crop after decades in the shadow of marijuana

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
Capital Press

Planting season for industrial hemp is well underway at a 3-acre farm near Boring, Ore., where Adam Kurtz is testing new seed varieties to ensure they meet regulatory guidelines. Kurtz is entering his third season growing hemp to make products derived from cannabinoid,

a chemical compound found in cannabis that reportedly offers health and nutrition benefits ranging from pain relief to reducing anxiety and depression. He began his company, Oregon Fusion, in 2016 with business partner Ed McCauley.

"Here we do a lot of different trials," said Kurtz, kneeling to inspect one particular strain of hemp named Sour Space Candy. "We're testing genetics a year in advance so we can offer them to our partner farms."

Hemp growers such as Kurtz are optimistic about the future of the industry, especially after the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee last week included the Hemp Farming Act in its latest markup of the 2018 Farm Bill. Sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., the provision defines hemp as an agricultural commodity and removes it from the list of federally controlled substances.

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Landscape shifting for export hay, analyst says

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press

Lower hay supplies in California and growing global demand are changing the landscape in hay production and export movement in the West.

Across the U.S., hay inventories on May 1 were down 36 percent year over year with drought and a long winter in some regions pulling down supplies.

But in California hay stocks are down 58 percent, largely because of reduced hay production, Jon Driver, industry analyst with Northwest Farm Credit Service, said in his hay outlook webinar.

California's hay production is definitely on a downward trend, he said. Its alfalfa acres are at their lowest level since USDA began tracking hay acres in

1919. The state's hay production is coming down and meeting up with Idaho's growing production, despite California's longer season and more cuttings, he said.

"That's a really key component to the whole West Coast export industry and to hay movements," he said.

California is a big dairy state, and dairy is competing with exports for hay in an atmosphere of declining production. That's causing a shift in where export hay is coming from, he said.

Northwest ports are exporting more hay than California ports right now, and the Northwest industry is responding to declining hay production in California, he said.

Washington has added at least five new hay presses in the last couple of years. Two new presses are being added

in Idaho, and Timothy hay is being introduced into the traditional wheat and bluegrass rotation in northern Idaho, he said.

"Hay supplies are getting tighter in California. Exporters are having to source hay in other places," he said.

Looking at trade tables, it's easy to see where export demand is coming from, he said.

For U.S. alfalfa "we can see some pretty amazing growth, particularly in Saudi Arabia, (and) China is still growing year over year," he said.

"If we look at the grass side, South Korea is certainly a growth market right now. Japan is still solid, and China is taking up the rear," he said.

But new competition is coming in

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Capital Press File

Less hay production in California gives growers in the Pacific Northwest an advantage in export sales, an analyst says.

New agricultural labor bill expected in Congress in July

By **DAN WHEAT**
Capital Press

A new agricultural labor reform bill is expected to be voted on in the U.S. House in July as part of deal to avert moderate Republicans and Democrats from bypassing GOP leadership and voting on immigration reform.

Bill language isn't available yet but hopefully will be more to the

liking of most agricultural groups by allowing legal status for current workers and avoiding a cap on the number of foreign guestworkers, said Michael Marsh, president and CEO of the National Council for Agricultural Employers in Washington, D.C.

"We may end up with ag labor provisions that will be very, very good," Marsh said. "If we can have the current workforce and no cap

on guestworkers, we might make E-verify work."

E-verify — electronic verification of employment eligibility — to ensure workers are legal is something many Republicans want.

E-verify without legalizing current workers and with a cap on the number of guestworkers would "devastate" labor-intensive agriculture, Marsh said. That's because an estimated 50 to 70 percent of tree

fruit and vegetable workers are illegal immigrants.

The non-agricultural H-2B-visa program is capped at 66,000 workers annually, and because of that Chesapeake Bay crab companies have gone out of business, he said.

HR 4760, sponsored by House Judiciary Chairman Robert Goodlatte, R-Va., would replace the

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