

Subject: Noise from the North #4

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Conversation: Noise from the North #4

Dear Readers,

Thank you for the positive feed back, which encourages me to continue with this effort. The main criticism from Noise #3 was on length; the information was interesting and useful, but the commentary was just too long. So I will begin to make this shorter, and perhaps less frequent. As always, previous issues of Noise from the North and other useful information are freely available at <http://www.finola.com>

A quote for this week:

Groucho Marx (1890 – 1977, American comedian, film star and master of wit)

“Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly and applying the wrong remedies.”

Maybe this “Marxist” philosophy is not always true!

Some good news arrived last week from The EU Commission. In the 83rd meeting of the Management Committee for Direct Payments, on 15 October 2008, it was decided that the Commission would review new data on THC values for Finola and Tiborszálási (insert the sound of huge applause).

This decision was in response to an especially peculiar bit of hemp legislation that was proposed last month (see attachment). I received this proposal on Monday 22 September, and I still have no idea who crafted it or why. This proposal disfavors dioecious oilseed hemp varieties in the EU to the point of specifically banning the most productive varieties; Finola from Finland and Tiborszálási from Hungary.

This peculiar proposal was up for a vote on Wednesday 24 September, but some Member States asked for more time to study it, and voting was put off until 22 October. It seems that this proposal did not pass as written.

We offer special thanks the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture for drafting a joint letter with their colleagues in the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture, with support from agricultural agencies in the UK and other Member States. This joint letter was dated 7 October and specifically pointed out the potential influence of environmental effects on THC results, such as the time of sampling. Hopefully a concern for the time of sampling and hemp crop is now firmly on the table as a key issue in determining THC values for hemp varieties in the EU.

The attached proposal is interesting, and offers some potentially favorable changes to the EU hemp regulation, but offered nothing of value to address the fundamental problem of correctly determining a fair and uniform sampling time for each hemp crop. In other words, none of the proposed changes would have helped to correct the unnecessarily vague and complex methodologies that are currently used in the EU to determine THC levels in hemp. These technical problems, which have inadvertently led to high THC values for both Finola and Tiborszálási, have been carefully described in the last three issues of Noise from the North. In effect, this means that a re-evaluation of de-listed hemp varieties with the current methodologies is still vulnerable to the same mistakes of the past. However, the possibility of re-evaluation is warmly welcomed as an initial step towards reconciliation on this issue.

Still, one might ask, is it any coincidence that the two most productive oilseed hemp varieties in the EU were specifically excluded by name in this attached proposal; i.e., Finola, which is specifically adapted to Northern Europe, and Tiborszálási, which is specifically adapted to Central and Southern Europe? If not a coincidence, then was the purpose of this proposal to simply eliminate the higher production capacity of seed from these two varieties, and subsequently discourage the existing markets for hempseed oil and other healthy hempseed foods from developing in the EU, by removing their subsidy? Such markets are already firmly established in North America. Is there any logical reason why they should not also develop in the EU? Is this just another episode of cannabiphobia?

In future proposals for changes to the existing EU hemp sampling

regulations, it would be extremely helpful if specific information were included on both the sowing and sampling dates of the crops, in addition to THC values, as flowering is under genetic control and also influenced by environmental conditions. The typical number of days until flowering should be included as basic information for each hemp variety, which would help official field samplers in the EU to estimate the correct time for sampling a hemp crop. Such information could also help to determine if unusual THC values were even valid, if sampling times were too late or even too early.

Many readers might be surprised to learn that internet seed vendors of unregistered drug-Cannabis “varieties” already include such information on their products, which are typically sold for 5-10 Euros **per seed!** Mention of this example is not to promote illegal drug use, but rather to make an important point; such private businesses provide detailed descriptions that include expected flowering date (typically within a 5 day range), plant height and potential yield. How is it possible that businesses selling unregistered drug-Cannabis seeds have the knowledge and resources to provide so much practical information on the flowering characteristics for their products, while the EU has nothing at all comparable for its relatively short list of industrial hemp varieties? Does this give the impression that perhaps there may be room for improvement in the current system? Why, for example, isn’t there an official web site for OECD-registered industrial hemp varieties, where official hemp samplers throughout the EU can find such information on flowering characteristics? Answers to these questions should be more important than drafting unpopular regulations to exclude valuable hemp varieties from receiving a subsidy and participating in the emerging hemp foods markets in the EU.

My present hope is to move away from the political aspects of hemp in the EU, and begin to focus a bit more on the nutritional properties of hempseed and the demonstrated health benefits from hempseed oil in future editions of Noise from the North.

Sincerely,

JC Callaway

“Tell me and I’ll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I’ll understand.” Chinese Proverb

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