

Before the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Presented by Zack Pistora, Kansas Sierra Club
Proponent Testimony on SB 263
January 15, 2018



Chairman Kerschen and Honorable Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to your consideration of SB 263, which would enact the Kansas Alternative Crop Research Act through the development of an industrial hemp research program.

Kansas Hemp production could be a game-changer for Kansas farmers and agribusinesses.

SB 263 would pave the way for expanded agricultural opportunity in Kansas, as it has for many other states that have legalized research and commercial production of industrial hemp. As a top ten agriculture state, Kansas ought to work to eliminate unwarranted governmental barriers for private enterprise to do noble farming business that will benefit the state of Kansas as a whole. Industrial hemp has a variety of uses and can be highly profitable for farmers who may already be struggling financially with growing current commodities. Industrial hemp would fit well for Kansas given our talented research facilities, farmers, and biofuel sector.

We support an industrial hemp program for its added environmental benefits to agricultural production.

The Kansas Sierra Club acknowledges that industrial hemp production could not only help the Kansas farmer and overall state economy, but our environment as well. Growing hemp can lessen the use of irrigation in water-stricken areas of Kansas, lessen the need for pesticides and fertilizers, and offers a sustainable, renewable energy source that can be easily composted, recycled, and used without toxic additives.

Here are some understood benefits of hemp when it comes to our environment:

- Hemp farmers in Colorado have stated that hemp uses one to two-thirds less water than corn.
- Hemp often needs little inputs of fertilizer and pesticides for successful growth.
- Fabrics made of hemp do not have any chemical residue, and is therefore safer for consumers.
- Hemp products can be recycled, reused and are 100% biodegradable.
- Hemp is a quick-growing renewable resource, making it much more desirable for bio-plastics and biofuels than fossil fuel-based fuels and plastics, as well as a much quicker turnaround for use as paper than slower-growing, more water-intensive trees.
- Hemp can also be used as an alternative for rotational crops, cover crops, and grass-based buffer zones to help with soil health and prevent soil erosion.

We hope these comments lend insight to this potential cash crop's advantages for conserving our natural resources in Kansas.

Thank you,

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The Sierra Club is the largest grassroots environmental organization dedicated to preserving, protecting, and enjoying our great outdoors. The Kansas Chapter represents our state's strongest grassroots voice on environmental matters for more than forty years now.