



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara-sponsored legislation to encourage growth of industrial hemp signed into law ~ Cornell University researchers, Farm Bureau, other farm advocates see economic opportunity

THOMAS F. O'MARA December 18, 2014

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Albany, N.Y., December 18— Legislation sponsored by State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C-Big Flats) and Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo (D-Endwell) to make New York the 16th state in the nation to establish a framework for growing industrial hemp as a way to diversify and strengthen the state's leading agricultural industry, has been signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo.

The legislation (S.7047/A.8297, Chapter 524 of the Laws of 2014) was approved by the Legislature in June. It authorizes a pilot program to allow hemp production for research to begin immediately by the state Department of Agriculture and Markets, and state colleges

and universities.

“The New York Farm Bureau, Cornell University researchers and other agricultural leaders and farm advocates recognize industrial hemp as a potentially lucrative way to provide new economic opportunities and a competitive edge for our farmers,” said O’Mara, a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee and the Legislature’s joint, bipartisan Commission on Rural Resources. “This pilot program will help New York State begin to secure a strong position at the forefront of a future industry that can diversify and strengthen our agricultural economy, generate revenue and create jobs.”

Cornell University’s College Agriculture and Life Sciences has already expressed interest in participating in the pilot program.

“Industrial hemp is an excellent candidate from a biomass standpoint, with high yield as well as multiple potential value-added uses,” said Jerry Cherney, Professor of Agriculture at Cornell. “Alternative markets allow farmers to minimize their risk and maximize profits.”

Lillian Taylor, Owner of Bully Hill Vineyards, Inc., said, “It’s been my strong belief for many years that industrial hemp can be a lucrative crop for many farmers. I’m thrilled that New York State is finally taking this economic opportunity seriously, and I’m confident that it will prove successful for our growers. It’s an opportunity that offers the potential for new manufacturing and new jobs right here at home in the Finger Lakes region, and throughout New York State. Thank you to Senator O’Mara, Assemblywoman Lupardo and Governor Cuomo for taking this action to help New York seize this new agricultural market.”

A provision in the federal Farm Bill enacted earlier this year legalized the growth of hemp for research by state departments of agriculture or institutions of higher education in states where it has been approved by law.

Fifteen states already have laws in place that allow them to begin producing hemp. The O’Mara-Lupardo measure will establish procedures for New York to begin taking advantage of this research and economic opportunity. Hemp is used around the world to produce fabric, rope, paper, oil, soap, lotion and even food. It also is rich in Omega 3 and Omega 6 fatty acids, which gives it numerous health benefits to both humans and animals. Its value as a rotation crop and biofuel has also been recognized. Both the stalk and seed from hemp can be used in the production of a variety of goods including textiles, building materials, paper, food, body products and environmental products such as biofuels.

In 2012, retail sales from imported hemp products were estimated at \$500 million.

The New York Farm Bureau also supports the new law, which it says would position the state as a leader in hemp production.

“Industrial hemp production would offer New York’s farmers new economic opportunities. Diversification is important as farms look to remain successful in a global marketplace, and industrial hemp could be another profitable alternative for agriculture, which in turn, would help boost the state’s rural economy,” said Dean Norton, President of [New York Farm Bureau](#).