



Wisconsin Hemp Program Transitioning to USDA in 2022

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MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin hemp program, currently administered by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), will transition to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) starting January 1, 2022.

“Since the inception of Wisconsin’s hemp program, DATCP has been committed to working collaboratively with the industry to establish a program for Wisconsin growers,” said Randy Romanski, DATCP Secretary-designee. “Through continued outreach with industry stakeholders and USDA, DATCP’s plan is to transition the program from a state-run program to a federal-run program. We believe this transition will provide hemp growers with the greatest opportunity to produce hemp in Wisconsin.”

States and tribal nations have the ability to transition their hemp program to USDA. Currently, three other states – [Hawaii, Mississippi, and New Hampshire](#) (North Carolina recently announced) – and multiple tribal nations have federal-run hemp programs. Many producers already work with their local USDA Farm Service Agency office to report their crops, so this transition aligns with processes already occurring.

Other benefits of a federal-run program include no licensing fees, the federal license is three years instead of annual, and it provides some flexibility utilizing private sampling and testing services. A federal-run hemp program also streamlines program rule changes, as growers will need to comply with just the federal program rules. To date, DATCP has had to promulgate emergency rule changes, update program operations, and conduct outreach to growers when a federal rule change was made.

“Because state-run hemp programs must also meet federal requirements, Wisconsin’s hemp program is already in close alignment with USDA,” said Sara Walling, DATCP’s Division of Agriculture Resource Management Administrator. “We are collaborating with USDA for a smooth transition and providing hemp growers with the resources they need to understand any changes.”

DATCP and USDA will hold a joint webinar from 1-3 p.m. on September 15 for growers to learn how to locate and work with their local USDA office and how to apply for a USDA hemp license. Growers can [register in advance with USDA](#) for the webinar. The link to register is also available on [DATCP’s website](#), as will be the recording of the webinar. A [transition checklist](#) for growers is also available.

“The state did a commendable task in creating and helping a hemp program thrive in Wisconsin for the first four growing seasons,” said Rob Richard, Wisconsin Hemp Alliance President. “We learned a tremendous amount of information about the plant in that time. Now that USDA has finalized their hemp rule and we’re seeing signs of federal financial resources in hemp research and development, this is absolutely the right time to shift course from a state-centric focused program to a federal program.”

Gov. Tony Evers’ 2021-2023 budget proposal provided ongoing staffing resources to support the hemp program, but those resources were not included in the final version of the budget passed by the legislature. Growers will continue to work with DATCP for the current growing season for harvest notifications, sample collection, and testing until December 31, 2021.

Starting January 1, 2022, hemp growers will transition to the federal-run program, but *hemp processors* will no longer need a DATCP license to process hemp. Hemp processors will remain under DATCP's current authority for consumer and food products.

DATCP will post hemp program updates at <https://hemp.wi.gov> as more details about the transition becomes available.

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