

I'm Brian Ochsner, a farmer and landowner in Cheyenne County, Kansas, and I urge the legislature to pass HB 2168, the bill to allow industrial hemp as livestock feed, and to lower licensing fees and registration requirements. The recent drought conditions in the western part of the state have lowered the amount of hay and silage available for livestock producers, and forced some of them to sell off some of their herd. It seems obvious that livestock producers need an alternative source of feed for their animals.

Kansas farmers also deserve as much financial relief in these tough economic times. Prices for fuel, fertilizer and chemicals have skyrocketed the last two years. And after a brief spike higher at the start of the Russia/Ukraine conflict last year, the price of wheat has gone a lot lower, and during what's usually been the most bullish season of the year. I see this as a very bad sign for wheat going forward, and yet another reason why farmers should consider growing at least one alternative crop, like industrial hemp.

American farmers don't "feed the world" anymore like we did decades ago, and can't rely on foreign demand to maintain higher grain prices. With nations like China, Russia and India growing more of their own food, it should be obvious that the old economic model that farmers have relied on in the past can't be relied upon now or in the future. Kansas farmers should focus more on feeding American citizens, and meeting market demand and needs here in the United States, instead of halfway around the world.

While traditional grains like wheat, corn and soybeans have - and will continue to be - reliable staples in human and livestock diets, there's been little to no growth in markets, demand for or creation of new jobs in Kansas with these crops. South Bend Industrial Hemp has done amazing work in the last few years, setting up a 13,000 square foot hemp processing plant near Great Bend, hiring new employees, and selling tons of hemp fiber to eager and willing buyers in the United States - in places as far away as Maine.

Industrial hemp has literally thousands of different markets and uses, and this has been known for decades. This was a quote from an article in the February 1938 Popular Mechanics magazine titled: **"Hemp: Next Billion Dollar Crop."** The biggest obstacles to Kansas farmers giving industrial hemp a try have been A) The lack of knowledge on how to properly grow, harvest, store and sell industrial hemp (South Bend Industrial Hemp has done a great job for education in this industry), and B) The Kansas Department of Agriculture, who insists on keeping higher industrial hemp licensing fees and unnecessary regulations for farmers and processors.

No matter how badly people in state government or grain associations want to bring back the good old days where wheat, corn and soybeans were kings, we need to realize those days and market status are gone... and probably forever. Industrial hemp has a much brighter future that can give Kansas farmers more options and markets, and provide more job and economic opportunities across the Sunflower State.

One of the biggest reasons why the state of Kansas struggles economically is because it hasn't made it easy for farmers or others to conduct business and explore new markets. I urge the legislature to pass HB 2168 to allow livestock producers to feed industrial hemp to their animals, and to make it easier for farmers to grow and make money with this valuable and versatile crop. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Brian Ochsner

