

The Failures of the Hemp Boom and the Rise of Potentially Dangerous Hemp-Derived Compounds

The passage of the 2018 Farm Bill resulted in the nationwide legalization of hemp cultivation in the United States, opening the door for farmers to grow and sell hemp.

With the legalization of hemp also came the legalization of the popular compound found in hemp: cannabidiol, or CBD. Despite numerous warnings from the Food and Drug Administration and virtually no peer-reviewed to support it, CBD is hailed by many to be a cure-all for a laundry list of ails, including COVID-19.

As such, the substance can be found in virtually any corner-store nationwide — prompting many farmers who have seen years of failing crops, falling prices for produce, and other such shortcomings to see hemp as a saving grace.

Results of the Hemp Craze:

- Licensed Hemp Production Exploded 445% from 2018-2019 with 510,000 acres of hemp being cultivated in 2019 versus only around 112,000 in 2018.
- Between May 2019 and October 2019, the price of wholesale CBD declined by 50%
- Farmers who are able to sell hemp, must do so at a loss. Many others are struggling to find buyers.
- In 2021, hemp production plummeted more than 80%. (Pew: <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2021/07/09/the-hemp-boom-is-over-what-now>)

New Hemp-Based Derivatives

With hemp sales and production, as well as the prices for wholesale CBD, declining, the massive glut of hemp and wholesale CBD have been redirected towards the production of new, quasi-legal psychoactive compounds: Delta-8, Delta-10, and THC-0.

Delta-8 & Delta-10 are compounds similar to Delta-9 THC – the main psychoactive compound -- that are found in the marijuana plant and are now being extracted from wholesale CBD. Delta-8 is said to produce a mild, body “high” whereas Delta-10 is said to produce a “head high,” similar in nature to the effects commonly attributed to the *Sativa* strain of marijuana.

While these products have led to a surge in interest surrounding new, CBD-derived, psychoactive substances available nationwide — and some states are leading an effort to ban them — a new product is quietly making the rounds: THC-O.

As one chemical engineer puts it, *“heroin is to morphine as THC acetate is to THC.”*

Key Considerations for THC-O:

- THC-O, or THC-O acetate, is another compound derived from federally legal hemp.
- Recent research has found it to be roughly three times stronger than marijuana and has become known as a “psychedelic compound” as it can have mild hallucinatory effects.
- As it stands, there are virtually zero safety standards for the use of THC-O.
- The production of THC-O is incredibly dangerous, with experts warning the process should only be conducted in strictly-controlled lab settings due to the use of highly volatile explosive chemicals involved in the process.

See an example of THC-O’s use here (Warning: Strong Adult Language):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELr2iQhVHaA>

Further Reading:

Hemp was Supposed to Boost Farmers. It’s Turned Out to Be a Flop.

<https://www.politico.com/news/2020/05/25/hemp-farmers-275046>

The Hemp Boom is Over. What Now?

<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2021/07/09/the-hemp-boom-is-over-what-now>

What is Delta-10-THC and What Do I Need to Know About It?

<https://acslabcannabis.com/blog/research-development/what-is-delta-10-thc-and-why-do-i-need-to-know-about-it/>

THC-O-acetate safety concerns: Q&A with scientist James Stephens

<https://mjbizdaily.com/scientist-explains-safety-concerns-around-thc-o-acetate/>