

LOCAL FLAVOUR – A HULL OF A GOOD TIME: ADDING VALUE TO HEMP WASTE

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A New Zealand medicinal cannabis and industrial hemp company is getting ready to unlock new markets with the help of a substantial research grant.

The Taranaki-based venture, Greenfern Industries, will use the \$145,000 grant to investigate ways to turn hemp seed hulls into high-value products for the export market.

Greenfern will work alongside Callaghan Innovation and Hemp Connect as part of the project funded by the Bioresource Processing Alliance (BPA).

Greenfern managing director Dan Casey says there are already plans underway for rapid expansion and value-added opportunities for the by-products of hemp seed processing.

The hemp is currently grown in Central Otago and Taranaki with the company planning to expand hemp seed farming to double its crop this year.

This isn't the first time Greenfern has looked into added-value products from this multi-purpose plant. The company recently teamed up with Sustainable Foods and the Riddett Institute research centre to turn hemp seeds into meat-substitutes and cosmetic products.

This time, hemp product suppliers Hemp Connect has an agreement with Greenfern to share its capabilities in cold-pressing hemp oil from Greenfern's hemp seeds as part of the research process.

Previously whole hemp seeds were cold-pressed for hemp seed oil (as the main product) and hemp seed cake remained as the by-product with a high fibre content but not a particularly pleasant taste.

Now the researchers will investigate how they can use the whole hemp seed as interest in hemp hearts (dehulled seed) grow. At the moment the by-products of hemp seed oil processing are hemp cake and hull. The hull has little market value currently and has previously been stockpiled.

The project will look at ways to convert parts of the seed into higher-value products such as antioxidants, oil, protein peptide supplements, and water-soluble hemp protein for beverages of the future that are attractive to both the New Zealand and global food and nutraceutical markets.

“As well as creating new products for export, there is an opportunity to work on new or improved ways of processing, improving yields, and reducing waste. Given our commitment to sustainability, we’re naturally really excited to be part of this research and development project,” Casey says.

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