

Could the Next Emirates Team New Zealand Boat Be Made Entirely of Hemp?

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With The America's Cup due to start in a few days' time, innovators from a very different sphere have been wondering how long it could be before New Zealand could be competing in a boat entirely built from hemp, with the crew eating high-energy, nutritious hemp-infused foods and wearing high-performance hemp kit?

Industrial hemp (iHemp) is from the same family as cannabis, but from different cultivars and without the psychoactive effects. Having historically fallen out of favour, it's rapidly finding its place in the world again, due primarily to its environmental and health benefits.

Hemp has a wide range of uses driven by its unique characteristics. Hemp textiles are naturally anti-fungal, antic static, antibacterial and antimicrobial and can stop 95% of the UV light. Used in construction materials, it is fire resistant, breathable and strong; one sixth of the weight of concrete and continues to sequester carbon throughout its life.

Current uses around the world include building material, medicines, rope, clothing, shoes, food, paper, bioplastics and biofuel. It is even found in the components of Mercedes C-class cars.

The global industrial hemp market is expected to reach USD 15.26 billion (NZ\$22bn) by 2027 (Grand View Research) and is an emerging industry in NZ that the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) has identified as having export market opportunities. Having only been deregulated since 2006, the NZ market is still in its infancy, with low levels of understanding among the general population and farmers and limited cultivation.

"New Zealand is well known globally for its boat building technologies,"

says Melissa Baer of software solutions company, Webtools Agritech and passionate advocate of sustainable farming.

“Wouldn’t it be awesome for us to showcase New Zealand to the world through our iconic sports. It’s not that big of a leap to imagine we could have an America’s Cup boat made entirely of hemp - hull, the ropes, the sails. Even what the crew wear.

“That would certainly put New Zealand’s industry and innovation on a world stage.

“And don’t just stop there - our All Blacks Jerseys and the cricket balls our players use...they could all be made of hemp too.”

Having a hemp boat would also help Emirates Team New Zealand in their carbon zero objectives - they recently partnered with Sir Stephen Tindall and The Warehouse Group to become the first America’s Cup syndicate to have a Toitū carbonzero certified campaign.

Webtools Agritech was a partner of the recent New Zealand Hemp Challenge, alongside the industry-body, New Zealand Hemp Industry Association (NZHIA). Their objective was to encourage participants from NZ’s research, student and business communities to generate ideas and identify market opportunities to leverage this predicted growth.

NZHIA’s Chair, Richard Barge said:

“We want to cement our place as a leader on the world stage in the hemp industry and create opportunities for New Zealanders.”

Winning ideas from the Hemp Challenge included hemp nappies which would address environmental production, disposal and odour benefits; plant-based, nutritious dog treats and a Christchurch Red-Zone revitalisation project, to combine

the growing of hemp, the building of hempcrete shelters for the homeless and an educational program.

While Emirate Team New Zealand's next boat may not yet be made from hemp, it is a perfect example of bringing fresh-thinking to what New Zealand is already known for and seeing how this can generate innovation and ultimately a strong economy.

These and other opportunities will be discussed at The iHemp Summit and Expo in May 2021 (20-22 May).

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Richard Barge, Chair of NZHIA and Melissa Baer, CEO Webtools Agritech are available for interview

The iHemp Summit

The iHemp Summit 20-22 May 2021, Rotorua is looking for ways that NZ can grow a billion dollar industry. Attendees will include producers, manufacturers, landowners, farmers and farm supply companies, to economic development agencies, agribankers, and scientists.

<https://www.hempsummit.nz/>

About NZHIA

The NZ Hemp Industries Association (NZHIA) is a membership organisation that was established in 1997. It is a non-profit society that supports the growth and development of all aspects of New Zealand's hemp industry.

It focuses on:

1. informing the public of the health, environmental and economic benefits of the industrial hemp sector;
2. building a community of individuals, companies and organisations to help grow the industry; and
3. collaborating with industry, government and the scientific community.

Richard Barge is the Chair.

He is a qualified accountant, has been involved in the industrial hemp industry since 1994 and is the co-owner of two hemp companies—Hemptastic NZ Ltd. and Hemp Seeds Foods Ltd,

<https://nzhia.com/>

About Webtools Agritech

Webtools Agritech is a leading provider of agriculture and transparency software solutions and consulting services to primary industry processors and aggregators throughout New Zealand and Australia. Products enable businesses to tell food and provenance stories through data.

Melissa Baer is the CEO of Webtools Agritech. With a Canadian organic farming background, she is an entrepreneur, innovator and thought-leader with a particular interest in the way we grow, transport and sell food.