

## Hemp Update

by Chris Grigsby, MCS Director

With the passage and signing of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (known as the 2018 Farm Bill), hemp and all parts of the plant were removed from the Controlled Substances Act and deemed legal for production, transport and sale in the U.S. This was very exciting news for the industry and marked a sharp turn from the previous 50 years, where hemp wasn't recognized as being distinct from marijuana.

The new provisions task the USDA with writing rules and developing a program that will govern production of hemp. While many of us thought it would be a quick turnaround, USDA signaled that they would not have anything ready for the 2019 growing season, and instead initial rules will be completed in Fall 2019. There will be a public comment period, but the hope is to have the rules finalized for the 2020 growing season.

This is important for organic growers in Maine to keep in mind, as the new rules will allow the research provisions laid out in the 2014 Farm Bill to be rescinded, opening up the possibility for organic certification of hemp in all fifty states. This would also likely include the certification of processed products. Until that point, we are still under the 2014 provisions, and in Maine, organic certification is only possible for research and tied to institutes of higher learning.

While hemp growers can now access MOFGA's Certified Clean Cannabis Program (MC3) for third party verification of growing practices, we recognize that hemp growers certified in this program may want to seek National Organic Program (NOP) certification. We envision that to be an easy transition if growers want to go that route. In the meantime, MC3 certification is an

option for the 2019 season. The deadline for applications is June 30, 2019. Visit <https://mofgacertification.org/mofga-certified-clean-cannabis-program/> for more information.

The USDA held a listening session for public comment to kick off the rulemaking process on March 13, 2019. The FDA is scheduled to hold a public hearing on Cannabis product safety, manufacturing, quality, marketing, labeling and sales on May 31, 2019.

### Useful Links

USDA's hemp production program webpage: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/content/hemp-production-program>

Vote Hemp:

<https://www.votehemp.com/federal-hemp-legislation/>



## Pest Report 2019

As those of you that receive the Pest Report emails have probably already noticed, Eric Sideman “handed over the reins” to MOFGA Agricultural Services’ Crop Specialist, Caleb Goossen. (We’re happy to report that Eric is still working part time for MOFGA!) Caleb will be continuing the Pest Report in largely the same tradition as Eric has provided it in the past, but the format may get some slight tweaks and updates to the content as new issues are sent out. As before, each issue is uploaded to MOFGA’s website within a few days of going out as an email and previous issues, as well as a sign-up link to receive the emails, can be found at: <http://www.mofga.org/Publications/Pest-Reports>

You can help make the Pest Report better by letting Caleb know when you notice the arrival of pests – even the ones you’re used to and know how to deal with – or when you find new resources and solutions to better manage pests and diseases on your farm.

Another email tool for commercial farms to share production tips, questions, or concerns is the Maine Vegetable and Berry

Growers’ Email Listserv, co-facilitated by Caleb and Jason Lilley of UMaine Cooperative Extension. In addition to growers buying, selling, and posing and answering questions to each other, Caleb solicits and compiles “Field Reports” to support farmer-to-farmer information sharing and a general “what’s going on” from farms around the state.

To subscribe, send an email to: [meveg-berry-subscribe-request@lists.maine.edu](mailto:meveg-berry-subscribe-request@lists.maine.edu) You will receive a confirmation email when you have been added. After you have been added to the list, you can post by sending an email to: [MEVEG-BERRY@lists.maine.edu](mailto:MEVEG-BERRY@lists.maine.edu)

Caleb is of course also available for direct crop production questions. For thorough responses, he suggests you email him ([cgoossen@mofga.org](mailto:cgoossen@mofga.org)) or call and leave a voicemail on his office phone (207-568-6029). For brief responses, you can text or call his mobile phone (207-370-8255).

