



## Technology & Innovation

---

### Hemp – gearing up for the automotive industry

November 03, 2005



There's no question hemp products can define versatility. In the edible department there are countless number of healthy and tasty treats in grocery and specialty stores. Meanwhile fashion conscious citizens can be seen in towns and cities throughout Canada and around the world proudly sporting hemp hats, shoes, shirts and pants of every imaginable size, shape and

colour.

Now apparently it's time for the natural fibre to kick it up a notch in the automotive industry.

"The idea of using natural fibres like hemp as a replacement for fiberglass and other reinforcement materials in automobiles was developed in Germany and by the early '90s was adopted as a common manufacturing method in many European cars," said Geof Kime, president/founder of Hempline Inc.

"It helps to reduce both weight and costs. Companies like Mercedes, BMW, Volvo and Fiat-Renault have been doing this for quite a while. About six years ago this technology of blending a natural fibre like hemp or flax with polypropylenes and plastics was implemented by some North American carmakers."

The composite material is heated up and compressed into a three-dimensional molded part. The most common application is for interior trims like door panels, molded arms under the rear window, headliners, trunk liners, ABC pillars and dashboards.

Now, with the technology more widely accepted and the cost of oil skyrocketing to historic highs, Canadian hemp producers are beginning to see benefits from their competitively priced natural products. The movement in the auto industry is to the exterior of the vehicle.

"Ford Motor Company has been working on new technologies using natural fibres for a number of years, so they are now trying to extend the applications beyond the established interior trim parts to the exterior," said Kime. "I'm not 100 per cent sure about the final prototype part but I know it will be on the exterior, likely a minor part."

"The food production side of the industry has steadily been on the rise while the fibre side, because it's more capital intensive, has taken a little longer to become established. In terms of food products, the grain has a very healthy oil profile – with omega three and six and healthy proteins."

Kime said while the auto sector will play a strong part in the future of the hemp fibre industry, it would not be the only market.

"It's still early for the industry but the diversification and the potential uses of hemp is what makes this so exciting for producers," he said.

A Health Canada report indicated the area licensed by 169 Canadian farmers in 2002 totaled 1,555 hectares. Production in recent years has been particularly strong in Manitoba.

Contact:  
Geof Kime  
[gekime@hempline.com](mailto:gekime@hempline.com)  
519-652-0440 (t)

"The auto sector was first off the mark because it has the buying power and research dollars but the same technologies are applicable to a wide range of applications," he said. "For example, there is a huge demand for sustainable and renewable materials in the construction industry. That's another market with great potential. And there is also sporting goods."

That's great news for producers like Dan Scheele of Ingersoll, who is harvesting 10 acres of Anka hemp and recently hosted the Ontario Hemp Alliance Field Day 2005.

---

Copyright 2012 Canadian Farm Business Management Council  
www.farmcentre.com