

QUALITY GAP IN HEMP SEEDS

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The hemp industry is new and exciting for farmers across the globe. Farmers are looking at this crop as a golden ticket. While in the hemp industry there are many new opportunities, farmers with only one growing season under their belts can tell you that the development of hemp involves challenges that many prospective farmers will not expect.

LACK OF QUALITY

Farmers expect the seeds or plants they purchase to be of a certain quality. The current standards of quality seeds in other crops are set very high with adequate germination. Years of breeding for a specific trait and seed labels that match what is in the bag have resulted in quality such as corn or soybean seeds. The large gap in hemp production has set a lower standard in the quality of hemp seeds. Sometimes a pack of seeds labeled as the same 'strain' will grow into very different looking plants. This also means that the individual seeds purchased may differ in appearance.

The fact that the appearance of cannabis seeds can differ has led some growers to believe that a seed's size, shape, or color determines its quality. On the contrary it is not recommended to look at scale, shape, or color to determine quality. Some strains simply produce smaller seeds than others, and sometimes the same plant can produce seeds of different sizes and shapes. The color and feel of the seed, on the other hand, can tell a little more about its maturity and potential to germinate or grow into a healthy seedling. Although this technique is far from reliable, it can be useful. One of the most significant disadvantages hemp seeds carry is the low germination rate. The average germination rates for grain and fiber hemp seeds are under 70%, and the average germination rate of feminized hemp seeds is estimated even lower, around 50%.

SEED OR CLONE

Consequently, some farmers consider using clones instead of seeds. Farmers who plant grain or fiber hemp will always buy seeds for planting, but those who want to grow cannabidiol (CBD) or other cannabinoids and terpenes must decide whether to use seeds or clones. For growers who seek to minimize costs and appreciate the convenience of ordering seeds and planting with favorable conditions, seeds are the obvious choice. This allows growers to purchase and store seeds in a cold room ahead of the growing season. But how can a supplier ensure a better quality seed?

SEED PROCESSING

Quality seeds produce quality hemp products. Processing hemp seeds correctly can improve the quality of seeds. For instance, seed priming is done to make seeds germinate faster and more uniformly. Disinfection equipment is used to prevent bacterial contamination and/or to eliminate seed-borne diseases. Disinfection leads to improved yields and germination. Film coating refers to the application of products that offer protection and nutrition for seeds. Besides, film coaters are often used to give the seeds a color for marketing purposes. These processes are to ensure a better quality hemp seed and should be done by competent machinery.

To conclude, the hemp market can be a golden ticket for farmers if the quality of hemp seeds does improve. Farmers are facing numerous issues growing hemp one of them being the quality of hemp seeds. Just as other row crops the quality of the hemp seeds is expected to increase. Furthermore, a crucial factor in maintaining quality of hemp seeds is to ensure a modern and well-working seed processing line.