



AGECON-19-08PR

August 30, 2019

Consumer Views on Use and Legality of Hemp Based Products

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As hemp products gain traction and increase in availability and use, the industry as well as extension professionals need to understand consumer sentiment toward hemp products. Currently, hemp production is highly regulated; however, hemp and hemp-based products are less regulated. This factsheet examines consumer views on regulations associated with hemp products. We then focus on Cannabidiol (CBD) oil use and perceived effectiveness as a medicinal treatment.

We utilize data from a 2019 online survey of residents throughout the Southeastern U.S. Nine Southeastern U.S. states were surveyed with between 200-250 respondents from each of the following states, Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee and approximately 450 respondents from Georgia.

Hemp Product Restrictions

Table 1 shows there are a wide variety of opinions associated with whether hemp products should have restrictions on production. For most categories, regardless if food based or not, approximately 80% of people believe hemp production should be legal, with around half (~40% total respondents) believing that there should be some type of restrictions on production. Mississippi respondents were more likely to oppose legal production of any category than respondents from other states, while respondents from Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana, and Tennessee were more likely to believe fiber products should be allowed production without restrictions.

Table 1. Respondent views on regulations for a variety of hemp products by state.

	AL	FL	GA	KY	LA	MS	NC	SC	TN
<i>CBD Oil</i>									
Should not be legal to produce	18%	16%	18%	15%	14%	29%	14%	20%	18%
Should be able to produce with some restrictions	42%	47%	46%	46%	45%	35%	47%	47%	44%
Should be able to produce without restrictions	40%	37%	36%	39%	40%	36%	38%	33%	38%
<i>Fiber Products</i>									
Should not be legal to produce	15%	12%	17%	13%	17%	22%	13%	14%	14%
Should be able to produce with some restrictions	36%	43%	41%	41%	34%	36%	43%	46%	38%
Should be able to produce without restrictions	48%	45%	42%	46%	49%	42%	45%	40%	48%
<i>Beauty Products (e.g., shampoo, facial creams, etc.)</i>									
Should not be legal to produce	13%	15%	17%	17%	16%	26%	12%	14%	17%
Should be able to produce with some restrictions	42%	41%	40%	41%	34%	31%	46%	44%	39%
Should be able to produce without restrictions	45%	43%	42%	42%	50%	43%	42%	42%	44%
<i>Granola Bars</i>									
Should not be legal to produce	21%	19%	20%	18%	19%	26%	21%	21%	22%
Should be able to produce with some restrictions	40%	45%	43%	41%	38%	37%	40%	42%	40%
Should be able to produce without restrictions	39%	36%	37%	41%	43%	38%	39%	37%	38%

	AL	FL	GA	KY	LA	MS	NC	SC	TN
<i>Seeds</i>									
Should not be legal to produce	22%	17%	19%	15%	17%	27%	18%	20%	20%
Should be able to produce with some restrictions	40%	45%	42%	41%	39%	36%	41%	47%	40%
Should be able to produce without restrictions	38%	37%	39%	43%	44%	37%	41%	33%	39%
<i>Milk</i>									
Should not be legal to produce	21%	23%	21%	22%	19%	26%	22%	22%	26%
Should be able to produce with some restrictions	40%	42%	42%	43%	35%	35%	38%	40%	36%
Should be able to produce without restrictions	38%	35%	37%	34%	45%	39%	39%	38%	38%
<i>Other Food Products</i>									
Should not be legal to produce	19%	20%	20%	20%	17%	23%	21%	22%	22%
Should be able to produce with some restrictions	39%	45%	44%	44%	40%	39%	40%	44%	39%
Should be able to produce without restrictions	42%	35%	36%	35%	43%	38%	39%	34%	39%
<i>Other Household Items</i>									
Should not be legal to produce	18%	16%	17%	17%	20%	22%	16%	15%	19%
Should be able to produce with some restrictions	41%	47%	42%	46%	35%	40%	43%	44%	39%
Should be able to produce without restrictions	41%	37%	40%	37%	45%	38%	42%	41%	42%

	AL	FL	GA	KY	LA	MS	NC	SC	TN
<i>Other</i>									
Should not be legal to produce	19%	18%	19%	21%	21%	25%	18%	18%	29%
Should be able to produce with some restrictions	39%	42%	44%	46%	38%	32%	42%	48%	31%
Should be able to produce without restrictions	42%	40%	37%	33%	41%	43%	40%	34%	40%

CBD Oil Use

Almost a third of respondents have used or have a friend/family member that has used CBD oil. This is similar to the finding by the Consumer Reports that 25% of Americans have used CBD oil within the last year of which one out of seven use it every day (Gill, 2019).

Of those respondents that have used/know someone that has used CBD oil, there is a strong perception that it can help with certain medical conditions. Furthermore, even respondents that have not/do not know someone that has used CBD oil report a high perceived agreement with the statement that CBD oil helps with certain medical conditions.

Table 2. CBD oil use by state.

	Use of CBD Oil				Agree/Disagree: CBD Oil from Hemp can Help with Certain Medical Conditions			
	Never Heard of	Heard of but You / Friend / Family have NOT Used	Heard of and You / Friend / Family have Used	Do Not Know if Used or Not	Mean - All	Standard Deviation	Mean - Have Not Used	Mean - Have Used
Alabama	13%	48%	29%	11%	72.5	24.8	74.4	80.8
Florida	17%	47%	29%	6%	73.2	24.8	72.5	83.8
Georgia	11%	49%	30%	10%	73.1	24.4	74.2	81.9
Kentucky	10%	56%	27%	8%	69.1	25.2	67.3	83.1
Louisiana	12%	46%	34%	8%	73.3	25.1	70.4	84.2
Mississippi	16%	42%	32%	10%	66.7	28.5	65.3	79.8
North Carolina	13%	46%	28%	12%	68.9	24.2	69.4	80.4
South Carolina	11%	43%	32%	14%	64.5	27.4	66.2	81.8
Tennessee	9%	49%	32%	10%	72.4	27.1	69.1	84

Conclusions

As producers and policy makers look to extension for information around consumer sentiment toward hemp products, it is fundamental for agents and specialists to understand that there exists a divide in the population associated with restricting or not restricting the production of hemp products. Further, CBD oil is used by a large percentage of the population with a majority strongly believing CBD oil has medicinal impacts. That said, producers need to consider the legality of claims and current Food and Drug Administration regulations prior to engaging in production of any products.

References

Gill, L. 2019. CBD Goes Mainstream. Consumer Reports. 11th April.
<https://www.consumerreports.org/cbd/cbd-goes-mainstream/>

