

Hemp Framework Explainer

Why hemp belongs inside the whole-plant architecture.

Hemp and Cannabinoid Policy • Audience: Public / Staff / Partner • Draft v2.1 • whole-plant framework



What this resource does: Explains why hemp is key to WRCL's mission instead of a side issue, and how a federal framework can support industrial hemp uses while regulating cannabinoid products responsibly.

Why hemp belongs in WRCL

Hemp serves as the clearest proof that federal Cannabis policy is fragmented. A plant might be legal to cultivate under USDA regulations, yet the finished products derived from that plant can still be classified as unstable or illegal under food, drug, or consumer-protection laws. This is not a minor issue. It's a primary contradiction WRCL aims to resolve.

Three different hemp policy conversations

- **Industrial hemp.** Fiber, seed, grain, food, feed, biomaterials, and manufacturing inputs. This group mainly needs stable agricultural practices, infrastructure, and market development.
- **Hemp-derived cannabinoid products.** Finished products containing cannabinoids raise consumer protection concerns regarding labeling, testing, dosing, youth access, and manufacturing.
- **Whole-plant federal coherence.** The same species shouldn't be permanently legally divided just because downstream product regulations vary.

WRCL's hemp position

- Maintain agricultural exemptions for legitimate industrial hemp.
- Recognize that hemp seed and industrial uses differ from the issue of intoxicating finished cannabinoid products.
- Avoid using the hemp/marijuana distinction as the main basis for federal law.
- Shift oversight of finished products toward use- and risk-based regulations.
- Ensure hemp does not become a loophole that allows adult-use policies, equity, and safety concerns to be sidestepped.

What a practical federal solution looks like

- Plant-level legality and cultivation practices that avoid assigning contradictory criminal labels to a single species.
- Agricultural regulations for industrial hemp and seed utilization.
- A cannabinoid-product framework establishing federal minimum standards with flexibility for states to implement stricter rules.
- Clear distinctions for finished products across non-intoxicating, intoxicating, medical, and industrial categories.
- Trade, finance, and tax regulations that prioritize compliance over exploiting loopholes.

Why this helps coalition-building

A comprehensive framework allows WRCL to welcome industry leaders, hemp-food stakeholders, cannabinoid-product regulators, and adult-use advocates without implying they all require the same regulations. It creates a space for hemp within the organization's mission while maintaining clear messaging.

Selected source basis

USDA hemp program overview — Current USDA cultivation, sampling, testing, and licensing baseline.

<https://www.usda.gov/farming-and-ranching/plants-and-crops/plant-breeding/hemp>

FDA regulation of Cannabis and cannabis-derived products — Current FDA baseline for THC/CBD in foods, supplements, cosmetics, and approved drugs. <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/public-health-focus/fda-regulation-cannabis-and-cannabis-derived-products-including-cannabidiol-cbd>

CANNRA: Considerations for federal hemp regulation — State-regulator view on hemp-derived cannabinoid gaps and needed federal floor standards. <https://www.cann-ra.org/s/Considerations-for-Federal-Hemp-Regulation-April-2023.pdf>

NIHC Fit for Purpose hemp framework — Industrial-hemp policy framework organized around use and purpose. <https://nihcoa.com/fit-for-purpose/>

NCIA: Navigating the Future of Cannabinoid Regulation — Industry policy paper arguing for regulation by intended use and cannabinoid profile. <https://thecannabisindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Navigating-the-Future-of-Cannabinoid-Regulation-Balancing-Safety-Innovation-and-Consumer-Access.pdf>

Strategies 64: The One-Plant Solution — Recent whole-plant framework proposal and useful strategic comparator. <https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/c3867b8d-9e34-48c6-9bda-231afbb4b7b9/downloads/911e85c7-e17d-44f9-9222-36918fa14adb/the-one-plant-solution.pdf?ver=1770546959970>