

The impact of the recent rescheduling of cannabis

In September 2018, seemingly out of nowhere, the use of cannabis was decriminalised in South Africa.

Many of my friends and family with whom I hadn't spoken to in years, now wanted to speak to me about dagga. (I've always had a love-hate relationship with that word. I hate how grotesque it sounds, but love how uniquely South African it is!)

All these friends and family members wanted one of two things: they wanted to use cannabis, or they wanted to grow it now that it was decriminalised.

THE RESCHEDULING OF CANNABIS IS GOOD NEWS

I had been cultivating cannabis for many years at that stage, and while it had been decriminalised, changes needed to be made to the scheduling of cannabis and its specific cannabinoids.

Fast-forward to 22 May 2020 and cannabis as a whole, as well as tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD), has been rescheduled. This constitutionally allows for private use and personal

cultivation. The South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) has now officially amended the scheduling of cannabis and specific cannabinoids to reflect the 2018 Constitutional Court judgment, which found that sections of the Medicines and Related Substances Act of 1965, were unconstitutional in limited circumstances.

CANNABIDIOL

CBD is now a Schedule 4 medicine, unless pack sizes are below 600mg and single doses are below 20mg. Products below these thresholds will be classified as supplements on Schedule 0, which are "included as or part of Complementary Medicine (Category D), with certain stipulations". These changes to scheduling will force CBD producers to register their businesses as medicines manufacturers. They will also need to register their products with SAHPRA.

Ricky Stone, a legal expert for the cannabis industry, said: "They're clearly going to come down hard on CBD; it's very dangerous for players in the CBD space".

THC AND HEMP

The psychoactive cannabinoid THC has been rescheduled



ABOVE: This reader says that in terms of climate and legislation, South Africa remains the best place in Africa to grow cannabis. FW ARCHIVE

to Schedule 6, allowing for commercial cultivation, exportation and the local sale of a medicinal product derived from cannabis.

The removal of cannabis from Schedule 7 is very good news for potential commercial hemp cultivators.

The previous classification placed psychoactive cannabis and hemp in the same category, requiring a medicinal production license for the cultivation of hemp.

Legislation now labels cannabis with a THC percentage of 0,2% or below as hemp, as per limits set by the EU.

This is a step in the right direction, although potential producers will need to be prudent about the genetics selected for cultivation, as genotypes with a 0,2%

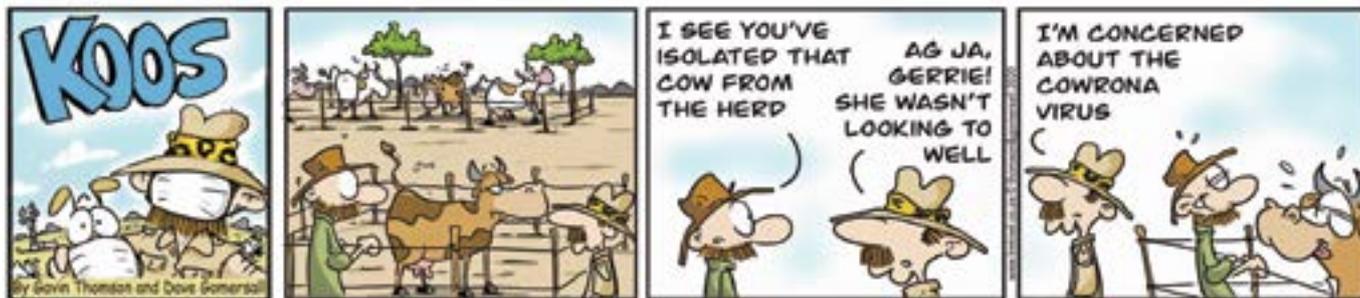
THC limit are harder to source and don't grow as vigorously as landrace varieties and cultivars with higher THC percentages.

These recent legislative amendments reflect the commitment of South Africa to be one of the leading medicinal cannabis producers in Africa.

Currently, in terms of legislation and climate, South Africa is the best place on the continent to cultivate cannabis.

Thomas Walker, founder of Commercial Cannabis Cultivation.

- References: sahpra.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CDB-containing-productscommunication-to-stakeholders.pdf
- For more information, visit walkercultivation.com.



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