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## CBD – Looking Toward The Future

The cannabis and hemp markets are among the most quickly-changing and diverse in the world today. These industries have been inhibited by regulatory restrictions for most of recent history, but as governments and municipalities have begun moving toward legalization, the markets have expanded almost explosively. But with this atmosphere of consistent change and lingering uncertainty, what does the future look like? This article will take a look at several pertinent questions regarding the CBD aspect of the cannabis and hemp industry.

### ***Why Isn't CBD Treated Like Other Botanical Extracts?***

From essential oils to vitamin concentrates, there are a huge number of botanical extracts and derivatives on the market. CBD, however, has long carried a shadow of wariness – almost suspicion. But why?

Despite having an over 2,500-year history of use, cannabis carries with it a number of social stigmas in modern society that can be tied to racism in the early 1900s, when it was outlawed for the first time in California. Given further power in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century by the so-called “War on Drugs,” these stigmas have helped to perpetuate misinformation, fear, and a lack of understanding around the differences between the various types of cannabis and hemp products and their derivatives, such as THC vs. CBD.

Additional mistrust may have to do with the phytoaccumulator status of hemp and cannabis. Phytoaccumulators very readily absorb inputs from the environment, both good and bad – including contaminants, heavy metals, solvents, etc. While this capacity can be used for positive purposes such as cleaning up contaminated soil or places where there have been hazardous spills, their ready uptake of potentially harmful substances can put those consuming or using the plant at risk if the substances used in producing the plant are not carefully controlled and monitored. This is especially true in derivative substances or concentrates such as CBD products or other oils; the process of extracting and producing these usable goods can increase the level of chemicals or heavy metals to an unsafe level.

### ***Best Practices For CBD And Hemp Labeling?***

Labeling has been a huge issue – every state has its own regulations. One of the safest options for producers is to study and closely follow the FDA guidelines for dietary supplements (for consumable products). Once the FDA-required information is clearly displayed, the requirements of each state that a producer intends to sell their products in should likewise be taken into account. Retail products – those physically placed onto a shelf for consumers to purchase – have thus far been under far greater scrutiny than those sold via e-commerce.

Medical and other benefit claims on labels are another area where producers may find themselves getting into trouble. This may also include the use of descriptors such as “health” or “wellness” on packaging – anything that might be construed as a promise or other guarantee of healing or medical benefits must be avoided.

Specific to hemp products, the clear marking of the product's <0.3% THC content (thus rendering it a hemp-derived item rather than cannabis) should be made readily apparent. However, claims of “0% THC” should be avoided – especially as testing methods change and improve, having such a claim found to be false due to a minutely detectable level of THC (even 0.01%!) could spell trouble.

## ***How Is The Market Emerging And Where Are Hemp/CBD Sales Headed?***

One of the largest drivers behind the CBD market continues to be word-of-mouth. While some companies have developed a foothold in retail settings with CBD products (such as calming gummies and other supplements or topicals), there remains a steady flow of interest on a grassroots level; one person hearing about the benefits of CBD from a trusted friend and deciding to try it themselves. Continuing to harness this level of trust and familiarity with safe, effective products will continue to play a role in directing the future of the CBD market.

## ***What Are Some Strategies To Reduce The Risk Of Regulatory Actions Against CBD Producers?***

Stay away from medical claims, not only on labels but ANYTHING associated with the company – website, social media, reviews, blogs, etc. Even if customers are making statements in reviews, if you publish them then they are viewed as your own claims. Medical claims are the number one cause of the FDA and state regulators going after producers.

In the absence of federal regulations, do not assume it's a free-for-all – follow GMPs. Regardless of state regulations or other municipal requirements, seeking certification in the GMP areas best suited for your type of product may help insulate you from scrutiny.

## ***What Challenges Are CBD Products Facing In Retail Settings?***

Big retailers and familiar chains have, historically, avoided adding CBD products to their shelves due to the often-tedious differences in regulations and requirements from state to state. However, some chains such as The Vitamin Shop and Walgreens have begun to sell CBD products in select states, with great care taken with regard to specific regulations. The strategies of these chains is likely to remain selective – particularly leaning toward trusted CBD brands – and may seek out those producers who have gone above and beyond the bare minimum to prove their trustworthiness and quality through certification.

As more unified policies are introduced and pass on a national level, the presence of CBD products on store shelves should, in theory, become more and more commonplace.

## ***In Conclusion***

It goes without saying that the hemp and cannabis industries – as well as their derivatives – will remain some of the most dynamic markets in the national retail and manufacturing scene for some time. As states continue to determine the legality of these substances and under what regulations they will be made available, PJRFSI is here to help you each step of the way. Whether through GMP or GAP certification, supplier audits, or other certification services, let us put our experienced team of auditors to work for you. Call **(248) 519-2523** to learn about what options are available, or visit our website at [www.pjrfsi.com](http://www.pjrfsi.com).