

Community - Whitewater Region

County farmer sees growth potential in hemp industry

Stone Farms responsible for one per cent of Canada's hemp crops

By Jake Davies

Cobden Sun editor

COBDEN—After a couple years of research and one year of putting that research to practice, Stone Farms believes there's a future in hemp.

"It outperformed expectations," Stone Road farmer Reuben Stone said of his hemp crop. "I'm pretty optimistic to see where it can go."

Standing near a couple of half-filled, 100-tonne storage bins at Stone Farms on a windy Monday, Sept. 14 Mr. Stone's three-year experiment on the legal cultivation of marijuana is almost complete. The grain is in the storage bins awaiting cleaning and "the marketing end still to be done."

So far, Mr. Stone believes the process has been a success.

"It's quite east to see (hemp) might compete with corn for acres in the county - put it that way," he said.

Stone Farms has been planning the project for awhile.

"This has been in the works for about three years," Mr. Stone said.

The first two years were spent researching the project and this year was spent putting the plans in motion.

Last May the Ontario Hemp Alliance (OHA) phoned Stone Farms and asked if they were interested in growing a

said. "It germinates very easily in a dry soil."

Mr. Stone says no licensed chemicals are needed.

"We didn't apply anything," he said.

Mr. Stone says the crop does respond well to nitrogen fertilizer and there was a "noticeable difference" between the hemp that was treated and the organic hemp Stone Farms produced.

The growing of the hemp was easily managed as well.

"It's very aggressive," Mr. Stone said. "It smothered any weed that tried to compete with it."

Harvesting is a different story though and can be stressful work.

"It's difficult to tell when it's ready," Mr. Stone said. "We were one of the first in Canada to harvest our hemp. The grain is what you are harvesting and our quality looks pretty good."

The problem is the seeds can fall from the plant very easily.

"As the season progresses watching the seeds drop to the ground makes you pretty nervous," Mr. Stone said.

Mr. Stone said they used a "highly modified" combine and hired a gentleman with nine years experience harvesting hemp to do the job.

That didn't alleviate much of the stress though.

"It's difficult to maintain the

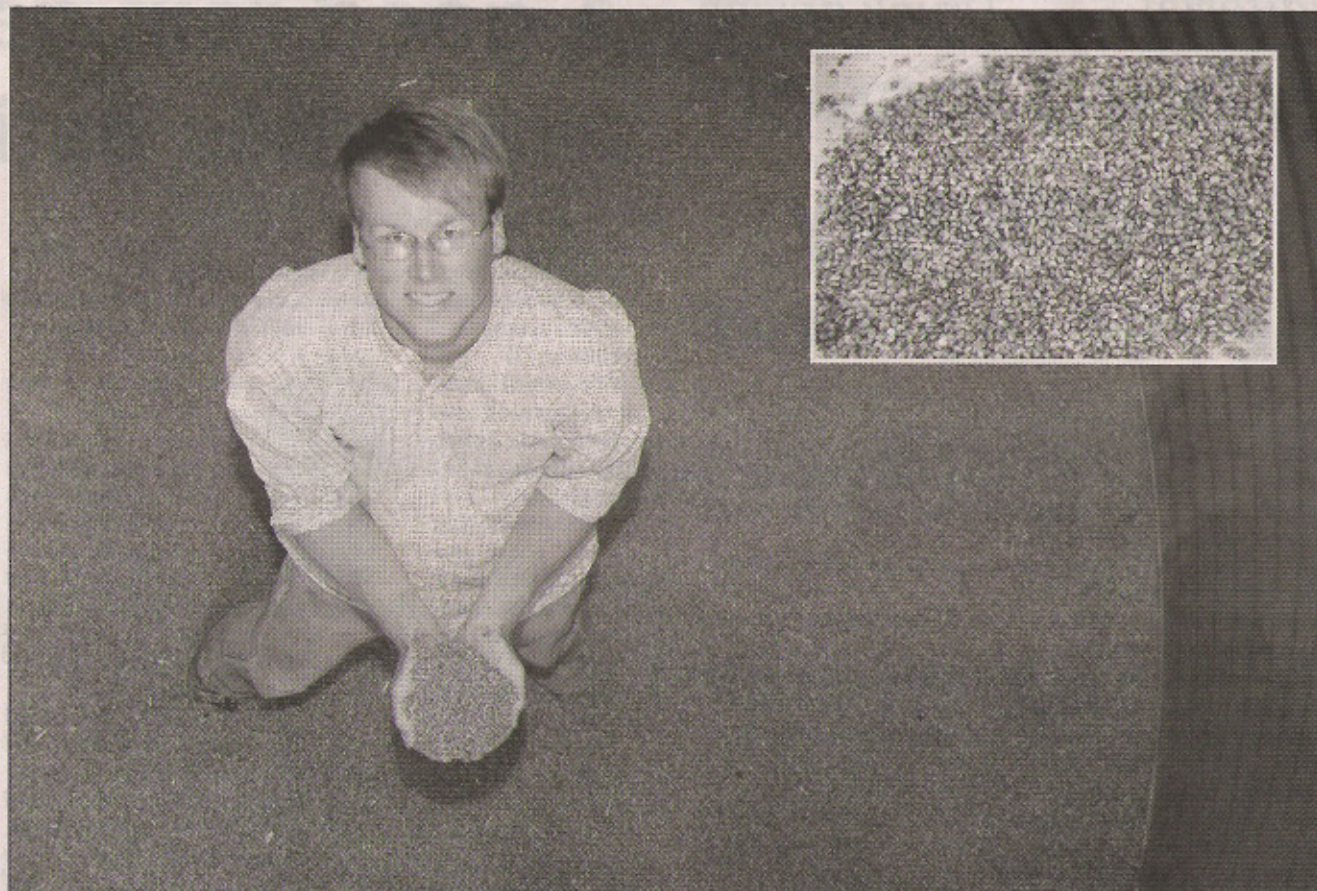


Photo by Jake Davies

Stone Farms' Reuben Stone shows off the grain harvested from the farm's hemp crop this year. The estimated 110,000 pounds of seed will be used in food production.

es to growing the crop in Canada.

"It's kind of a closed market because the U.S. is not allowed to grow it," Mr. Stone

said. "They can buy it as long as the seed is sterilized. The easiest way to sterilize a seed is to process it."

Mr. Stone said they did

lose a small amount of their crops to poachers but it is the poachers that are in for a bit of a surprise. Although it is nearly impossible to

tell the difference between hemp and marijuana by eye, hemp has none of the affects marijuana does if smoked or consumed.

