

# CROP FACT SHEET

## FIBER HEMP (*Cannabis sativa* L.)

<b>Soil type</b>	Hemp thrives well on all soil types but is very sensitive to compressed and saturated soil. Acidic soils (pH <6) must be avoided.
<b>Seedbed preparation</b>	Structural damage resulting from intense tillage under bad weather conditions must be avoided. In spring a false seedbed can be created. Depending on the soil type, tillage is done in spring or autumn. The seedbed must be fine-textured and even.
<b>Date of sowing</b>	Hemp can be sown as from mid-March onwards. The soil temperature should be between 12 to 14°C and not lower than 6 to 8°C. Hemp grown for fibre must be sown as early as possible in order to obtain the longest possible fibre and the highest possible crop.
<b>Sowing</b>	Hemp grown for fibre is usually sown at 35-50 kg/ha. The depth is about 2 cm.
<b>Fertilization</b>	The standard for hemp is 100-120 kg N/ha, 70 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> and 200 kg K <sub>2</sub> O per hectare when soil supply is normal.
<b>Crop protection</b>	The crop grows fairly quickly, making it easy to keep the parcel weed-free. Although birds tend to systematically eat the seeds, other diseases or pests are nearly nonexistent.
<b>Rotation</b>	Hemp is a self-tolerant crop but rotation with other crops is of course worthwhile
<b>Flowering season</b>	Hemp grown for fibre comes into bloom in the second half of July.
<b>Harvesting period</b>	Harvesting takes place in the second half of August. The ideal time is between the peak of the bloom and the beginning of the seedpods. The harvest can however only be started 10 days after the bloom at the earliest in order to be able to check the THC content. Early harvest is only possible on demand.
<b>Harvesting method</b>	Due to the height of the crop (till 4 metres) and the toughness of the fibres appropriate harvesting machines are required. Such machines are not available in Flanders. Different kinds of machines have been developed and they are successfully used in the Netherlands, Belgium, France, the UK and Germany.
<b>Retting</b>	After harvesting, the straw is laid on the ground in swathes. The straw can then, depending on the weather conditions, dry and ret for 2 to 3 weeks. While retting, enzymes dissolve the pectin which holds the fibres and the wooden parts (shives) together. It is important to turn the straw twice in order to achieve uniform retting.
<b>Rolling</b>	After retting, the hemp straw is pressed into round or square bales. The yield amounts to approx. 6-10 tonnes/ha.
<b>Processing</b>	While processing, the shives are mechanically separated from the fibres. The straw is broken and scutched (removing shives). The result of most hemp processing lines is a fibre which can be used for technical applications.

