

New wellness chain gives hemp a hand

The hemp movement in South Africa has been given a massive boost with the opening of the first Wellness Warehouse at the Lifestyle Center in Kloof Street, Cape Town. The new chain, with three stores opening this year, has been launched to cater to the growing demand for healthy, ethical and socially aware brands; and will be selling a full range of hemp products - much of which will be supplied by Hemporium.

Since 1996, Hemporium with its flagship store and café in Constantia, has been working with hemp to produce high quality clothing, cosmetics and foods. Recently they have also undertaken a project to show the viability of industrial hemp as a material for building houses. The aim of the company is to educate people about the benefits of hemp with innovative products and hope to soon reach their goal of having this truly sustainable crop cultivated in South Africa.

This year alone Hemporium has taken orders from Woolworths and have collaborated with Levi's to produce the brand's first ever hemp t-shirt, for the "Rocking the Daisies" music festival. Other big brands such as Billabong have also showed an interest in their range of hemp materials.

Tony Budden, the marketing director of Hemporium said that the venture with the Wellness Warehouse (www.wellnesswarehouse.com) will for the first time make hemp cosmetics, clothing and foods will be accessible to all South Africans. He further emphasised the need for local production: "All we need now is to be allowed to grow the crop locally. Currently, we are forced to import all of our raw materials, the hemp fibers for clothing, hemp stalks to produce building materials and the hemp seeds for foods and cosmetics, from half way around the world. This pushes the local consumer price of hemp products up dramatically.

"It's a blatant contradiction that every product derived from hemp is legal, but the growing of the plant itself is still prohibited. With the global demand for hemp products on the rise coupled with the fact that South Africa has the perfect climate for the hemp plant to thrive, and our serious problem of unemployment and poverty, it only makes good sense to allow local farmers their right to start growing this truly sustainable plant."

For more information, visit: www.hemporium.com