Standards drive innovation and adoption for emerging industries. Industrial hemp needs them now!

Emerging industries present opportunities for innovation, advancement and rediscovery. No other emerging industry has the potential impact across broad sectors than hemp. In an age where biopreferred is leading the conversations in tech and product development no other plant has the potential to become so many finished products in our everyday lives outside of our kitchens, packaging, automobiles, insulation and clothing the possibilities are limited by our genetics and processing capacity rather than inspiration.

The partnership between ASTM and NIST represents a new horizon for building capacity and industry adoption through standardization, and it is this standardization that will drive commercialization and scaling for the domestic and global hemp industries. I am new to ASTM and as the recently appointed chair of the Industrial Hemp Subcommittee D37.07 (soon to become a division of 37 rather than a subcommittee), I look to the volunteer members tasked with creating standards to bring their knowledge and know-how to the forefront to address where standards are needed that benefit their ability to compete with other commodities and raw ingredient inputs. Until we know what the specifications are for a bioplastic feedstock or a spinner to blend cotton and hemp we cannot meet the desires of those industries to produce 'natural', American grown and processed goods and products.

The recent USDA Hemp Research Needs Roadmap focuses on the need for standardization to develop finished products and end markets, and the research needed to reach scale for these markets to flourish. This combined with the announcement of the NIST award of 15 million to ASTM to create a Center of Excellence for international standardization for critical and emerging technologies is an opportunity to create a thriving hemp industry from the ground up. Farmers, Chemists, Processors and Manufacturers are ready to incorporate hemp, but they need the raw ingredient inputs to do this. Additionally, they need those inputs to be readily available and consistent. The marriage between the processors supplying these ingredients and the manufacturers who want to buy them happens through committee engagement organically at ASTM. The goal of a working group is to find the experts on both sides of the value chain and bring them together to create standards. When this happens adoption is widespread because the process of approving such standards is a consensus where every member sees and can effect the standard before it is final.

The reason that I began to work with ASTM was because it was mentioned in the USDA Interim rules for the Hemp Program as the standard making body experts that should be relied on for developing testing methods for compliance. Six years later our industry has changed markedly, but the needs for standards and an organization that drives their development with industry engagement is needed again. This work should be done openly, shared and criticized by the companies that will be using them, so that when they are final adoption has already begun. Universities and agencies are necessary partners so that research and applied sciences are happening in real time to help fill gaps in knowledge. I look forward to continuing to work with

NIST and the USDA to develop these standards and the day when Industrial hemp is no longer an emerging industry, but a developing one.