

Let's Talk Hemp: Highlights from the 2021 Southern Hemp Expo

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Several members of our Hemp Law team attended the Southern Hemp Expo in Raleigh, NC last week.

This was the third annual installment of the #SHE, but the first time it was held in North Carolina. It felt as though organizers were able to pull off a successful and energizing in-person conference, educational summit, and trade show. Selfishly, it was exciting to host the event and its participants in our backyard! And it's always great to spend time with friends and business colleagues in person, especially after a prolonged period of virtual-only events and conferences.



We Still Need Common Ground for Success

It's been a recurring theme for some time, and across different events, but the #SHE3 panelists, presenters, organizers, and vendors all seemed to agree: industry participants and trade groups

can, and should, continue to find unity and common grounds for collaboration without letting perfection or competition get in the way of collective progress. We each play a role in helping to promote professionalism and transparency, and we must hold ourselves and our friends accountable to the highest standards of excellence and safety. Taking the next step as a growing industry will require us all to regularly communicate, learn from and apply our own lessons from the past, and find ways to promote a collective agenda and ideas through the industry as a whole.

Stop Me If You've Heard This One before...

Cannabinoids continue to lead the market from a commercialization standpoint. Companies like Bhūmi, Appalachian Standard, Longleaf Provisions Company, and many others continue to push out innovative and

exciting new retail products. Craft commodity hemp flower still has a vibrant and important place in the retail market. And whether you love it or hate it, delta-8 tetrahydrocannabinol ($\Delta 8$ THC) is a driving force in the industry today. It remains vitally important for industry operators to appropriately scale their business, focus on the right plant genetics, and hone in their costs, skills, and efficiencies in operations.

The Industrial Use Wave is Building

Fiber, food, and industrial use applications within the industry were well represented at the #SHE3 as well. It's refreshing and exciting to see groups like HempWood, the Hemp Feed Coalition, Victory Hemp Foods, the U.S. Hemp Building Association, the National Industrial Hemp Council, the Southeast Hemp Association, and many others continue to make progress in their sectors of the industry.

Hemp business operators still face challenges and risks each day, and the future regulatory landscape for the industry is anything but certain. But hard work, entrepreneurial spirit, and ingenuity continue to drive the success of this industry. We're excited to see what the future holds as industry participants find new ways to collaborate, celebrate and support one another's successes. And Ward and Smith's Hemp Law team is here to support that effort.

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