

## Hemp: The Fabric of Our Lives

By Ariel Schwartz, August 17, 2009



Hemp is one of the fastest growing biomasses in existence, uses less water than cotton, and requires minimal pesticides to thrive. Yet it is still illegal to grow under U.S. federal law due to its relation to marijuana. That hasn't stopped hemp fiber from making headway into the mainstream consciousness, and now even Hanesbrands--one of the world's largest consumer apparel brands--is getting in on the action.

Portland, Oregon-based Naturally Advanced Technologies [1] has proven that Crailar Fabric Technology can turn the normally rough hemp into a material that is as soft as cotton. Hanesbrands likes the idea so much that it is allowing Naturally Advanced Technologies to retrofit its dyeing equipment with the company's technology to test if hemp fabric can be used in regular production.

Naturally Advanced Technologies' process has a big advantage over organic cotton: cost. Crailar Fabric shrinks less during production than cotton, so then final cost is close to that of regular, non-organic cotton. So Hanes gets

the advantage of a cost-efficient process along with the environmental credibility that comes with using hemp products.

If all goes as planned, the traditional Hanes cotton t-shirt could be replaced with the Hanes hemp t-shirt. Once that happens, it will be hard to justify laws of any sort against hemp production. And who knows? Maybe one day we'll even live in hemp houses [2].

<http://www.fastcompany.com/blog/ariel-schwartz/sustainability/hemp-fabric-our-lives>