

Creating a New Pharmaceutical Industry in Canada - The Thebaine Opportunity

There is currently a thriving pharmaceutical industry growing poppies for pharmaceutical medicines in the United Kingdom, Europe and Australia, but not in North America.

A new variety of poppy, the thebaine poppy, can be used to produce prescription drugs such as oxycontin and codeine, and does not contain the narcotic properties of traditional poppies.

Canada is the only G8 country that does not grow or process the raw materials for poppy processing, however, Canadians purchased over 500 million dollars worth of prescription medications derived from poppies in 2008.

Several locations have the ideal growing conditions for a high yield thebaine poppy crop in our country.

It is critical for the Federal Government to open the way now for the private sector to innovate so we can find new higher value added opportunities in using our soil, water, processing factories, and research scientists. This is especially important so that national objectives are achieved to replace public sector fiscal stimulus with private sector investment and to enhance farm incomes from the market.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce supports the creation of a cluster of biological science industries in our nation, using farm commodities and biotechnical research, that has the potential to adjust to foreign exchange fluctuations impeding the international competitiveness of many agricultural and manufacturing sectors.

Recommendations

That the federal government:

1. Facilitate the creation of a new pharmaceutical industry by communicating to the federal Minister of Health that when reviewing applications for approval, the Minister recognizes the potential of farming and processing of thebaine poppy in Canada for the pharmaceutical industry; and that these applications be expeditiously reviewed and approved by Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.
2. Support ongoing research at universities which are currently working on projects, including thebaine poppies that foster a new national pharmaceutical industry.