



Awareness and Perceptions of Hemp

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As producers, extension agents, specialists, and policy makers engage with the public about hemp related topics, a central issue is the confusion between hemp and marijuana. Though hemp and marijuana are technically the same species (*Cannabis sativa* L.), they are significantly different from one another. A plant with content of 0.3% or less dry weight of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is considered hemp, while a plant with greater than 0.3% dry weight of THC is considered marijuana. This definition was standardized by the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018. Other than THC levels, hemp and marijuana have many of the same physical characteristics, and distinguishing between them can be difficult.

The misperceptions that hemp and marijuana are the same will create the need for education. Using data from a 2019 survey of respondents throughout the Southeastern U.S., nine Southeastern U.S. states were surveyed with between 200-250 respondents from each of Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee and approximately 450 from Georgia.

As noted in Table 1, between 5% and 15% of respondents are currently growing hemp production of the

the awareness level of respondents in those states. Respondents perceived hemp to be marijuana. For rural residents that extension comes into contact with, it is essential for extension agents to understand the differences and provide informative material to residents as well as to educate policy makers, and law enforcement officials. Understanding the differences, the resulting regulations, education, and outreach are essential for successful hemp production.

Table 1. Awareness and Perceptions of Hemp.

	Perception of Hemp
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