

# Briefing on dagga

## Association advises emerging KZN farmers on growing cannabis

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A "FLEDGLING association" for South Africa's many cannabis growers had its first meeting at Cato Ridge last night to advise emerging farmers from six rural areas on how to grow cannabis for hospitals and other uses.

The farmers hailed from Melmoth, KwaDukuza, Mandini, Winterton, Underberg and the South Coast.

They were addressed by the founder of Durban-based Canna Culture, Krithi Thaver.

Thaver told the farmers in a briefing session in Camperdown about the still-onerous process to get a licence to grow

cannabis, which hybrids were in demand for medicinal use, and the future of the cannabis market.

The meeting followed the format set last week in Soweto, when Dr Thandeka Kunene, the only person permitted to grow cannabis for research in SA to date, and her brother, Daluxolo, addressed emerging farmers in Gauteng on the demand for cannabis and hemp products.

Founder of Hemporium Tony Budden told *The Witness* that the Cannabis Developing Council of South Africa (CDCSA) is a fledgling association, formed in response to various government officials' request for an industry association that could speak on behalf of its members.

Budden said to council members this will help shape future regulations that will set standards and ensure fair play in SA's future cannabis market.

He warned the processes to change the laws that still prohibit possession and dealing in any part of the cannabis plant will take two to four years.

Meanwhile, the next step for the fledgling council is to get current players involved, write a constitution, and establish sub-councils that could speed up the progress that has been made in the last two years towards decriminalising and regulating cannabis. These sub-councils will have to deal with nine government departments, namely Agriculture, For-

estry, Economic Development, Environmental Affairs, Justice, Rural Development and Land Reform, Science and Technology, Small Business Development, Trade and Industry, and Health.

Cannabis is often touted to have over 50 000 uses, all of which threaten established petrochemical, forestry and pharmaceutical interests.

The CDCSA website currently proposes 30 licences in four categories, starting with free licences for rural farmers to grow seed for its high nutrition up to bio-fuel refineries to turn hemp into methanol to power vehicles.

Thaver told *The Witness* the current black market for medicinal cannabis in

SA is totally unregulated, but the buyer deserves to know exactly what they are buying, whether from a sangoma or from one of several doctors now advising their patients to use cannabis.

He stressed the CDCSA's move to develop a booming cannabis-farming sector is not connected to the recreational use of cannabis, which he predicts will continue unabated in southern Africa.

Thaver invited any interested parties to join the CDCSA to help shape the regulations that will govern the quality of their harvests and profitability of their businesses in future.

Contact Krithi Thaver at 062 292 1389.