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Argentina Launches New Hemp and Cannabis Agency

February 02, 2023

Argentina recently launched a new national agency that aims to expand the country's **cannabis** industry. Ministers hope that the move will help create new jobs and exports for the South American nation.

In a conference launching the national hemp and cannabis agency, ARICCAME, Economy Minister Sergio Massa said,

"This opens the door for Argentina to start a new path in terms of industrial exports, on the basis of huge **global** demand."

He added, "All this needs to be **transformed** into an industry which generates work, which generates exports for Argentina and which generates value."

Massa said that the agency would begin working with local governments and industry. Argentina is depending on demand for projects linked to the agriculture and industrial sector, he said.

Francisco Echarren, who will lead the agency, said the industry could create thousands of new jobs, technological developments and new products for export.

"We have a huge **challenge** ahead of us," he said, "not only getting a new industry on its feet, but giving millions of Argentines **access** to products that improve quality of life."

Argentina made cannabis oil legal for medicinal use in 2017. This change permitted the federal government to grow the plant for research and treatment purposes.

In 2020, Argentina made it legal for people to grow marijuana at home for medicinal use. The act also made it legal for drug stores to sell products taken from cannabis. In addition, the new rule ordered **insurers** to cover marijuana-based medications for patients with written permission from a doctor.

Uruguay became the first modern country to directly permit growing, selling and smoking marijuana in 2013. In Colombia, President Gustavo Petro has also spoken about more laws to increase the country's cannabis industry.

I'm John Russell.

Sarah Morland reported on this story for Reuters. John Russell adapted it for VOA Learning English.

Words in This Story

cannabis – *n.* a tall herb that is used to make drugs such as marijuana or hashish

global – *adj.* worldwide

transform – *v.* to change (something) completely and usually in a good way

challenge – *n.* a difficult task or problem : something that is hard to do

access – *n.* permission or power to enter or make use of

insurer – *n.* a company that provides insurance