

Rediscovered and reprocessed: Hemp in South Tyrol

## Oberalp Group and partners present a variety of hemp products

Right next to the Oberalp Group's own hemp field, the Alpine Hemp Collection of the SALEWA brand, amongst others, was presented at a cross-industry event on the topic of hemp on September 7, 2022.

Bolzano (IT), 07.09.2022 -- A cross-industry collaboration to rediscover industrial hemp. The cultivation and research of the plant leads to new forms of cooperation and a variety of products. In front of the hemp field at the Oberalp headquarters in Bolzano, Italy, a range of products were presented at a press conference, to be tried and tested. From food, cosmetics, apparel, building material up to medical remedies – the plant has a wide range of uses. However, smoking is not one of them: industrial hemp only contains minimal amounts of THC, the psychoactive cannabinoid.

For many years, this collaboration project team has aimed at rebuilding the lost competencies around the hemp plant in the alpine region. The mountain brand SALEWA (which belongs to the Oberalp Group), works alongside Christoph Kirchler of Ecompassion (specialized in functional cosmetics, medical products and dietary supplements), Helmuth Profanter (biological bakery in Brixen), Werner Schönthaler (building material manufacturing and trade), Valentine Troi (Standortagentur Tyrol and Alpenhanf 360°) and Christine Ladstaetter (materials expert at SALEWA).

Hemp has a long but interrupted history in South Tyrol and Tyrol. Among linen and flax, hemp was traditionally grown to produce high quality fibres for mooring ropes, sails and paper. In the 1960s, a loss of image of the plant brought also a loss of knowledge about its cultivation and utilization. Nowadays, it regains importance, because of its favourable ecological balance and extraordinary qualities. Hemp requires neither pesticides nor fertilizers or genetically modified seeds to grow. While one kilo of cotton needs approximately 5000 litres of water, hemp is more sufficient: the plant in the Salewa Garden (of the Carmagnola variety) has grown more than 4 metres high between May and September 2020 – with fewer than 300 ml water though rainfall – and produced more than 14 tons of biological mass. Moreover, hemp improves the soil quality with its roots by extracting contaminants, preventing erosion at the same time. And last, hemp provides habitat and nutrition for many insects and thus contributes greatly against bee mortality.

The variety of use cases became apparent in the presentation of the products in front of the Salewa Garden of the Oberalp Group: Christine Ladstaetter displayed Salewa's **Alpine Hemp Collection**. Hemp is the strongest regrowing (natural) fibre and, especially when wet, a lot more resistant than cotton (2.5x) or polyester (1.4x). The

mountain sport industry makes use of the resistance and excellent transpiration abilities of the fibre. Innovation around cultivation and use, such as **composites**, were presented by Valentine Troi of the Standortagentur Tyrol; Werner Schönthaler explained the benefits of hemp as **insulation and building material**; Helmuth Profanter brought a typically South Tyrolean bread (Schüttelbrot) and protein bars made with hemp; and Christoph Kirchler had **cremes**, handmade CBD (cannabidiol) extracts, high quality **cosmetics** and **dietary supplements** on hemp basis, which could be tested.



*For the Alpine Hemp Collection of the SALEWA brand, the water-saving and rapidly growing hemp plant is used as a textile raw material.*

For the cultivation of hemp in the Alpine region to succeed, we need farmers, associations, and researchers, who are enthusiastic and interested in experimenting with this plant. In the last three years, the Salewa Garden with its hemp field has shown what is possible, proving that hemp can be easily and without complications grown and cultivated in the Alpine region. Following this example, a couple of innovative farmers in South Tyrol and North Tyrol have started their own cultivation. However, most of the worldwide hemp production still is in China, where it is grown and processed. The team around the South Tyrolean hemp collaboration project is working towards building a value chain that will make it possible to make their different products from regionally grown hemp. A timeframe of ten years is regarded as realistic.

## Press Contact

**OBERALP AG**

Marie-Luisa Roos

Sustainability Specialist Oberalp Group &

Group Corporate Communication

+39 0471 24 29 00

[sustainability@oberalp.com](mailto:sustainability@oberalp.com)

.....

**The Oberalp Group** is a family-owned and management-led company with headquarters in Bolzano, northern Italy. Heiner Oberrauch founded the company in 1981 and today the group employs roughly 700 people, runs 10 subsidiaries in Europe and the United States, and serves 3,500 customers in over 60 countries worldwide. In addition to the development and production of mountain sports articles, the company also operates as a distribution partner of sports-based brands. The formerly Munich-based SALEWA brand has been part of the Oberalp Group since 1990. Over the years, the group has acquired the brands DYNAFIT, POMOCA, WILD COUNTRY, and EVOLV. In 2022, the group launched the new mountain brand by women for women LaMunt. The family business relies on the courage to break new ground, continuous innovation in products, processes, and thinking. A conscious, sensible approach to the environment and resources and a passion for sport and mountains are the foundation of a living corporate culture. Since 2019, the Oberalp Group's sustainability report "Contribute" has been published simultaneously with the balance sheet figures. For the sixth time in succession, the company was the only enterprise in Italy to be awarded the "Leader Status" of the NGO "Fair Wear Foundation".