

Markets

Pot Imports Grow as U.S. Stalls on Medical Research

By [Kristine Owrham](#)

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- ▶ [Biopharmaceutical Research Co. acquired batch from Netherlands](#)
- ▶ [‘It saddens me that Americans aren’t the ones producing’](#)

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▶ 3:09

In this article

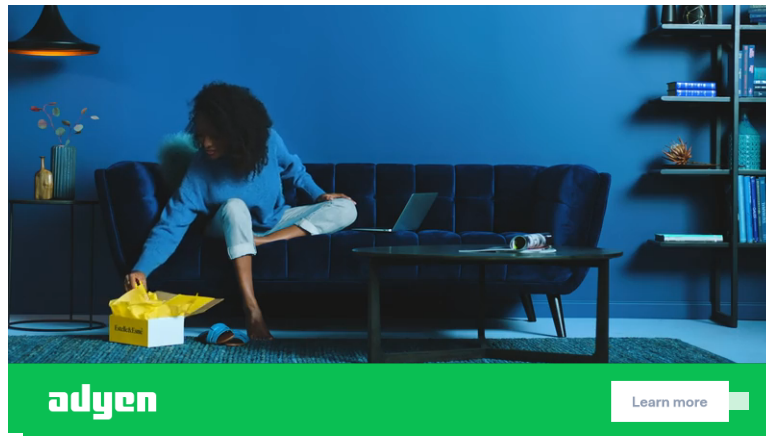
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One of the top advocates for allowing U.S. companies to grow cannabis for research purposes has imported a batch from the Netherlands, saying he had no choice because of the lack of progress at home.

California-based [Biopharmaceutical Research Co.](#), founded by former Navy SEAL George Hodgkin, legally imported a small quantity of marijuana from [Bedrocan International](#) last month to use for scientific analysis with the goal of better understanding the plant.

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“As someone who fought for this country it saddens me that Americans aren’t the ones producing the cannabis materials that we are researching,” Hodgkin said in an interview.

Canadian-grown cannabis has also been imported into the U.S. for research purposes. [Tilray Inc.](#), for example, has brought in pot for clinical trials at the University of California San Diego, New York University and Columbia University.

The restrictions on researching cannabis in the U.S. stem from a longstanding federal prohibition on the drug, despite it now being legal in 33 states for medical use and 11 for recreational use. Currently, there’s only one government-approved farm at the University of Mississippi that grows pot for research purposes.

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The Drug Enforcement Administration [said in August](#) that it would propose new regulations for growing marijuana for scientific and medical research, and would then make decisions on pending applications from growers. It first [invited](#) those applications in 2016.

Attorney General William Barr pledged in April to act on those pending applications, and said he was “pleased” the DEA was moving forward in August.

Then things stalled, said Senator Brian Schatz, a Democrat from Hawaii who sent a bipartisan letter to Barr last month urging the DEA to allow researchers to obtain products from state-legal dispensaries.

“The deadline for response was Dec. 20 and they did not get back to us,” Schatz said in a phone interview. “This is another ominous sign that this administration opposes not just rescheduling or descheduling or decriminalization, but anything that has to do with cannabis, they’re fighting it.”

Schatz said he believes Congress can pass marijuana research legislation in 2020.

If it can’t, Hodgin said his company is prepared to import more cannabis.

“I would much rather all of those tax dollars and intellectual property and job creation stay here in America, but if the federal government continues to be defined by inertia, then I suppose we’ll have to look outside the United States for our research materials,” he said.

Events This Week

TUESDAY 1/14

Aphria Inc. reports earnings pre-market

Organigram Holdings Inc. reports post-market

Several publicly traded cannabis companies present at the ICR Conference in Orlando, Florida

AltaCorp Capital and ATB Financial focus on cannabis stocks at the life sciences day of their institutional investor conference

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