# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 2378**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 26)**

**Mr N Singh (IFP) to ask the Minister of Health:**

Whether he has taken any steps to engage with his counterparts in the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the Department of Trade and Industry in respect of the commercialisation of hemp in South Africa, as was previously advised by the Director-General of Health, Ms Malebona Precious Matsoso, at her last appearance before the Portfolio Committee on Health on the Medical Innovation Bill [PMB1-2014]?

###### NW2557E

**REPLY:**

Cannabis sativa (both hemp and marijuana) is regarded as an illegal substance and its production, manufacturing and trade are prohibited by Section 22A (9)(a)(i) of the Medicine and Related Substances Act 101 of 1965. Several interest groups, farmers, researchers and even members of Parliament have expressed the need to legalise the commercial production of hemp to unlock its economic potential.

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries (DAFF) has for a number of years coordinated an inter-departmental team, which included representatives of the Department of Health, in an effort to find solutions for the legal challenges regarding hemp. Other members of this team include the Departments of Justice and Constitutional Development, Trade & Industry, Environmental Affairs, Economic Development and the South African Police Services. The team also include the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). Some of the key activities of this team included the consideration of all relevant research reports, assessment of the legal prohibitions affecting hemp production in South Africa and the approaches in other countries where hemp production has been legalised. In addition to this work, the National House of Hemp funded a feasibility study on hemp production in South Africa. The NAMC undertook this feasibility study and concluded that, if a conducive legislative environment exists, hemp production for industrial use in South Africa would be feasible.

DAFF and the Departments of Health are developing guidelines for regulating the cultivation and manufacturing of hemp and hemp products. The two Departments will involve all stakeholders for their inputs before implementing the proposed framework.

END.