

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: 3/25/2010

CONTACT: Ellen Komp, California NORML (Emerald Chapter)

[ellen@canorml.org](mailto:ellen@canorml.org) 707-223-5755

## Study: Small Scale Cultivation Best Way to "Expel Criminal Elements"

An extensive literature review of recent Dutch-language research on cannabis cultivation has concluded that small-scale cultivation is the most effective means to remove crime from the marijuana trade.

The paper, titled "The case for small-scale domestic cannabis cultivation," is authored by Tom Decorte of the Institute for social Drug Research, Ghent University, Belgium, who also concludes that high-THC strains may be a health problem, and there is a market for organically grown marijuana.

"This reads to me--if the Dutch findings are translatable to the U.S., and it seems many are--then it's imperative for public safety and public health, as well as the quality and purity of medical marijuana, that Humboldt, the Emerald Triangle, and other regions grow cannabis on small farms to take the marijuana market back from criminal elements," said Ellen Komp, Deputy Director of California NORML. "This study should be read in light of the two legalization proposals currently being debated in California (TaxCannabis 2010 and AB2254)."

"The shift to regional production, trade and domestic cultivation of marijuana has become an irreversible international trend throughout Europe," Decorte states, citing interdiction efforts and the involvement of criminal gangs in the domestic market. He discusses a recently published paper based on 18 interviews with large-scale cultivators and other entrepreneurs in the commercial cannabis sector ([Maalsté & Panhuysen, 2007](#)) which found "these commercially oriented growers testify about the increasingly criminal character of the cannabis trade (threats, possession of weapons, rip-offs and snitching). The new, more commercially oriented players "are not always interested in quality and in knowledge about the possibilities of the plant, but they are more interested in strong weed varieties and the financial profit that they can generate. According to some growers, this leads to a scantier supply of varieties, questionable quality, pernicious practices and higher prices."

In an internet-based study, cultivators in the UK "point at the intangible (social and intrinsic) rewards of growing cannabis, and not just the financial profits. Others have acknowledged the existence of 'ideologically oriented' dealers and growers, but they either argued these 'trading charities' and 'mutual societies' died out in the 1980s as they were replaced by more criminally orientated drug dealers."

Decorte's own findings suggest that there is a market for organically grown weed, and a need to have it certified as such, writing, "[M]any small-scale domestic cultivators grow cannabis because they are not satisfied with the cannabis products sold by Dutch coffee

shops: too 'strong' and 'chemically boosted'. These users want a 'milder', 'healthier' and 'more organic' product.... Nowadays the Dutch coffee shops and other distributors are also selling some varieties of cannabis as 'organic weed' ('bioweed'). Whether the 'organic weed' in the Dutch coffee shops really is any more 'organic' (read: 'healthy') than other varieties, needs to be tested. It might just be a smart marketing strategy.”

The paper also concludes that too-high THC indoor strains are a health problem. “The health and psychological affects and risks of cannabis with high THC concentrations raise a lot of concerns among experts and in the public debate, but they are not well understood.”

“If politicians can muster the courage to abandon the traditional repressive strategies and authorize decriminalisation experiments in the short term and on a local level, steps can be taken towards a pragmatic and realistic (and hence also a more effective) policy,” Decorte concludes. “At first sight, allowing small-scale domestic cannabis cultivation while combating large-scale cultivation, seems an attractive option.”

A link to the study can be found at <http://www.canorml.org/prop/Decorte.pdf>

# # #