



EDD

ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham
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Hemp Manufacturer Takes Over Cheese Factory

Big Dog Industries set to hire 125 over 5 years

LOVINGTON, N.M. - Big Dog Industries, a company specializing in all areas of the hemp market, has purchased the old Lovington Cheese Factory with plans to rehab the vacant space into a fully integrated products business with 125 employees, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham and the company announced today.

Big Dog Industries and the Lovington Economic Development Corp., signed the agreement to transfer ownership of the 90,000-square foot building, which sits on ten acres and has been vacant since 2007. The New Mexico Economic Development Department has pledged \$750,000 from the state LEDA fund to the project, while the city of Lovington has pledged \$250,000.



"This is a transformative step forward in our economic diversification efforts," Gov. Lujan Grisham said. "This plant has been empty for more than a decade. Now it will be a thriving hub, a real-life demonstration of the power of redevelopment and a commitment to value-added agriculture. I'm excited for Lovington, I'm excited for Big Dog Industries, and I'm incredibly excited to see what they will achieve together."

Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes of the Economic Development Department said Big Dog is the agency's third LEDA investment in a hemp business since Lujan Grisham took office. All three (Big Dog, 420 Valley, and Rich Global) have reinvested in older vacant buildings, two in Las Cruces and now one in Lovington at 4400 S. Main St.

"The fact that state investments can incentivize this kind of redevelopment is a great thing for these communities," Secretary Keyes said. "These LEDA projects are not only creating

jobs, they are helping to relieve blight and that will spur additional investment in this rural area.”

Lovington Economic Development became the owners of the cheese factory building after the long-time business closed and a fire destroyed part of the structure. The community realized that the high-profile building would not be reutilized without substantial investment.

The organization spent \$85,000 on repairs and maintenance, enough to get it into shape for the sale to Big Dog Industries

“This is huge,” Evelyn Holguin, Director of Lovington Economic Development said. “We’re not only filling a vacant building but creating 125 jobs to diversify our economy in an area that is dependent on oil and gas.”

“For well over a decade, this very prominent facility has remained vacant at one of the main entry corridors to Lovington,” Lovington City Manager James R. Williams added. “The fact that it will now be in use and creating jobs will show that our community is moving towards a very bright future. From a finance standpoint, the direct and indirect revenues generated from this business will diversify our economy and help to alleviate the burdens of the “boom or bust” cycle of the petroleum industry.”

Big Dog Industries CEO Brian Meyer is a fourth-generation Nebraska farmer who has experience with hemp, corn, wheat, and soybeans, and whose grandmother still owns 3,000 acres. Brian Meyer and his partners plan to invest \$15 million in the building and seed-to-retail business the next several years. They hope to become a national player in the market for oils, lotions, edibles, clothing, chocolates, and bath products.

“The State of New Mexico and City of Lovington have made this move to New Mexico really attractive for us,” Meyer said. “It’s really going to be a positive thing for our business and the community.”

Meyer expects to spend about six additional months on repairs and improvements, but the building is large enough so that some operations can start immediately. The project is expected to generate an economic impact of \$423 million statewide over the next 10 years. Meyer said he was one of the first farmers to successfully grow hemp and knows the pitfalls of the crop. He is already working with growers to produce a more robust product.

Big Dog will also use state-of-the art CO2 extraction equipment that can extract oils from 1,400 pounds of biomass a day.

Part of the appeal of the Lovington plant was that it has 10,000 square feet of refrigeration, a necessity as processed hemp needs to be stored at 60 degrees or cooler so it doesn’t deteriorate.

Big Dog Industries has access to 5,000 acres of farmland in Iowa, Nebraska, Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Colorado, and has a program that includes hemp education and farming practices, labor training programs, and financial assistance to growers.

The LEDA money will be paid out as the company meets its hiring benchmarks of 125 employees over five years.

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The New Mexico Economic Development Department's mission is to improve the lives of New Mexico families by increasing economic opportunities and providing a place for businesses to thrive.