

## Central Eastern Ontario Hosts First Biofibres Industry Field Day

August 16, 2004—Industry experts, economic development officials, fibre producers, and government officials gathered in Central Eastern Ontario (CEO) for a full day of tours and discussions designed to help participants understand the region's potential for development of a biofibre industry.

Known for production of hemp and flax in the 1800s, the CEO Region runs from Brighton to Kingston and north from Lake Ontario, and a half day's drive from any of Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal or upper New York State. The mix of soils and climate, with significant local receptor capacity, suggests the region is ripe for a resurgence of an environmentally-friendly fibre alternative. Just as important, the region already has a nucleus of hemp fibre producers and regionally-adapted genetics. Much of the field day focused on demonstrating existing capabilities through visits to four local farms, several of which are pursuing bioproduct development initiatives based on hemp fibre.

Ontario Hemp Alliance President Gordon Scheifele and local plant breeder-researcher John Baker provided a report on the spring 2004 federal biofibres trade mission to Germany, focusing particularly on technology developments and opportunities. John Baker's participation in this mission was supported by Trenval CFDC, the Quinte Economic Development Commission, and Biotech CEO. Initial presentations also updated participants on the region's participation in Ontario's Biotechnology Cluster Innovation Program (BCIP) and expectations for further advances in the fall of 2004.

In the field, John Baker described plant breeding efforts – now in their fifth year – based on fibre hemp genetics with nearly 200 years of natural adaptation to the region. (Note that all of Mr. Baker's work is carried out in cooperation with Health Canada.)



OHA President Gordon Scheifele – wearing a hemp hat from Lee Valley – examines a feral hemp variety now grown for fibre in Hastings County.

At further field sites, participants learned about regional efforts to rejuvenate stocks of Carmen seed (hemp fibre) for the 2005 growing season as well as preparations for registration of feral varieties recovered by Mr. Baker, who is licensed by the federal government for bio-prospecting.

Participants also viewed samples of hemp fibre-based products under development by local entrepreneurs and participated in a lively discussion over dinner of strategic priorities for development of a regional biofibres industry.

Special thanks are extended to the Quinte Economic Development Commission for logistical support as well as to the Harry, Grant, Moorcroft, and Baker families for hosting the Field Day participants at their homes and businesses.

Individuals interested in staying in touch with the development of the CEO Region's biofibre industry are invited to get in touch with Kathryn Wood at 613-376-6006 or by email at [ncr@sympatico.ca](mailto:ncr@sympatico.ca).



John Baker reviews eight test plots of feral hemp variety mother lines and hybrids. The mother lines were collected from four sites in Peterborough, Hastings, and Lennox and Addington Counties.



The Carmen plot (left side of photo) will be harvested – using conventional farm equipment – first for seed, then again later for fibre. Note that the hemp is higher than the corn (right side).