Costa Rica's Medical Cannabis Market Advances in Exports and Manufacturing as Patients Await Pharmacy Access

EU-GACP cultivation and locally licensed THC GMP manufacturing mark progress as industry leaders weigh domestic access and exports on a Cannabis LAB webinar



WEBINAR POSTER

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On October 22, Cannabis LAB (CLAB) convened five figures in Costa Rica's medical cannabis industry for a live webinar in its Global Cannabis Markets Series, The State of Costa Rica's Medical Cannabis Industry: Domestic and Export. The picture they drew: four years after its medical cannabis law passed, Costa Rica has an EU-GACP audited cultivation operation, a Ministry of Health licensed THC manufacturing laboratory with a local GMP designation, and its first medicinal cannabis shipment to Europe. The next milestone is access at home.

> “This is what the Global Cannabis Markets Series is for: the people actually building a market, speaking candidly about what works and what still needs fixing. Costa Rica deserves that attention.”
>
> *Robert Friedman, Founder*
> *Cannabis LAB*

On the CLAB panel: Dr. Stephan Brunner, Diputado and former First Vice President of Costa Rica; Cree Crawford, CEO/Founder of Vantage Point Global, Corp.; Jorge Luis Calderón Chaves, GM at Hybrida Farms and President of the Cámara Costarricense de Cannabis Medicinal; Riley Shields, Director of Production at Hybrida Farms; and Jason Warnock, President of ThinkMode.

A law written for export

Dr. Brunner, who as First Vice President was charged with making the new law work, was candid about its design. "The law was [initially] set out more for exports, not for the domestic market," he said. The assumption was that Costa Rica would cultivate and export, and the pharmaceutical

work would happen elsewhere. In June 2025, the Ministry of Health opened the registration of cannabis medicines for pharmacy sale under RTCR 515:2024. Brunner called the turn toward domestic sales "a twist I didn't anticipate." At the webinar he expected a remaining laboratory testing and certification issue for domestic product registration to be resolved within weeks, after which "we will see some brands ... selling product in [the] local market." That was his assessment, not a ministry deadline; those decisions rest with the ministries, which his office supports through guidance and communication.



Costa Rican Cannabis Market - Existing Exports + Pending Domestic Medical

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The chamber's three bottlenecks

For the Cámara, Jorge Calderón Chaves said exporters have a workable path while domestic sellers face three problems. First, genetics: few approved cultivars and scarce legal seed. Second, crop protection: no molecules are registered for cannabis pests, so cultivators rely on natural inputs. Third, and hardest, registering finished medicines so pharmacies can stock them. As of this release, Calderón confirms, no finished cannabis product is registered for sale in Costa Rica, so none is on a pharmacy shelf, even as chamber members field daily calls from patients asking where to buy.

The investors' case

Cree Crawford arrived in Costa Rica in 2021, producing medical cannabis and hemp educational events before there was a cannabis industry. Today the companies backed by Vantage Point Global Corp., the US-based private investment holding company, hold those licenses and are working toward entering the domestic medical market. In written remarks after the webinar, Crawford explained the choice of market: "We chose Costa Rica for its people, for its recognized strengths in agriculture, medicine and science, and for what the country stands for."

Crawford earned his standing on the science side of medical cannabis and industrial hemp, as a

founder of regulatory technology software, a member of the Association of Food and Drug Officials' cannabis and hemp committee and its Laboratory, Science, and Technology Committee, and co-chair of the National Hemp Association's Standing Committee of International Hemp Organizations. Going first in a new market, he added in the same remarks, is never easy. "As operators, we experience the real industry challenges before anyone else. The requirements bar is high. That is what makes a Costa Rican license mean something in Europe and all markets that matter." The aim, then and now, is to contribute to Costa Rica. As he told the panel: "We were clear with ourselves from the first day what kind of company we did not want to be. We did not want to be … a foreign company that arrives and takes what it can. We came to build, to contribute to the economy, and support the people."

1,400 meters under an equatorial sun

Riley Shields came from the US to build Hybrida Farms' cultivation team with Costa Rican staff. At 1,400 meters near the equator, the sun, "especially in the morning to the early afternoon, is absolutely the biggest hurdle for growing in a greenhouse here in Costa Rica," Shields said. Every producer wants "the same exact harvest" twelve months a year, and the Cartago facility's conditions deliver it: humidity under 70 percent even in heavy rain and temperatures of 68 to 88°F (20 to 31°C) year-round, "the difference maker."

What a serious buyer checks

Jason Warnock, President of ThinkMode and former Chief Commercial Officer of Flora Growth, brought the importer's view. Canada leads exports despite costly artificial light and cold-climate production, while Costa Rica's sunlight, renewable grid and export-agriculture workforce put it "in this perfect little niche." "People overestimate … THC," he said. Buyers also weigh consistency, terpene profile and clean handling from greenhouse to pharmacy, and on that basis Costa Rica is "differentiated even in Colombia or Thailand or any of those newer exported markets."

Calderón closed on unity: "The law is not perfect; it is under corrections … But at the end, what must prevail is the real Costa Rican spirit, which is together we can do it, and together we are better." Brunner, speaking for Costa Rica: "My job is to make all these people [license holders] successful, and if they are successful, I am successful."

About Cannabis LAB

Cannabis LAB (CLAB) is a year-round cannabis business association for the people and companies building the industry. Its Global Cannabis Markets Series examines international opportunities, regulation and business development. Educate. Connect. Grow.

About Vantage Point Global, Corp.

Vantage Point Global, Corp. is a US-based private investment holding company focused on life sciences, agricultural technology and novel therapeutics. Its Costa Rican companies are Hybrida Farms, an EU-GACP audited cultivator, the country's first dual THC and hemp licensee, a licensed Esencial Costa Rica brand user and source of the nation's first medical cannabis export to Europe; and Vantage Point Global Labs, a Ministry of Health licensed GMP manufacturer of

cannabis products, with EU-GMP goal next year.

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