

The canna revolution - Q&A with Cannabis Expo director Silas Howarth

 By Ruth Cooper

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The Cannabis Expo has been postponed due to the Covid-19 outbreak. After a successful run in Joburg, The Cannabis Expo returns to Cape Town from 19 to 22 March 2020 at the GrandWest Casino and Entertainment World. With the addition of the Cannabis Convention, as well as over 200 exhibitors, the cannabis food market, informative workshops and much more, the 2020 event promises to be bigger and better than ever.

We got in touch with expo director Silas Howarth to find out what goes into putting on an event of this nature, shifting stigmas, advice for budding entrepreneurs and CBD trends.



Silas Howarth - image sourced from www.network24.com

▣ What would be your top stands, workshops or talks to not miss?

With so many exhibitors, workshops and panel discussions covering the whole spectrum of the vast cannabis industry, it's hard to place any specific ones above the rest. There is currently huge excitement and anticipation around national government's recently-shifted stance towards cannabis and further legalising sectors of the industry, so at this year's expo the panels and workshops discussing the next regulatory steps and the best way forward for the benefit of all will be well worth attending.



The Cannabis Expo returns to Cape Town in March 2020

5 Mar 2020



▣ Can you tell us more about the Cannabis Convention, what can delegates expect?

The Cannabis Convention, being held for the first time in Cape Town alongside the expo, is really the meeting point for the cannabis business leaders, change-makers, entrepreneurs and government representatives, a place where they can interact with each other, set up and attend meetings with a dedicated app, and take part in panel discussions that will help forge the future of the entire industry.



■ ***What have been some of the more innovative or interesting products you have seen at the previous expos?***

Cannabis recruitment agency for jobs in the industry; cannabis health treats for your pets; high-end rolling machines that look like they were designed by Bentley; irrigation systems for growing your plants which withstand load-shedding; and an array of CBD edibles, including gummies, lollipops, mints and even CBD slushies.

■ ***How have you seen stigmas surrounding cannabis and CBD shift over the years?***

With the 2018 ruling that legalised consumption and growing of cannabis in private for personal use, followed by last year's effective de-scheduling of CBD, we have seen perceptions around cannabis and the cannabis industry shift dramatically. This can be seen when looking at the volume and range of people attending the expos around the country. Tens of thousands of people visit the expo, looking for something to improve their health or for opportunities in the industry, who just a few years ago would have considered anything to do with cannabis an illegal and taboo activity.



■ ***What are some of the pros and cons of working in such an emerging market?***

The cannabis industry is one of the fastest-growing and most exciting markets to be involved in! The growth of the industry here in South Africa has been phenomenal, with new and innovative products and services popping up almost daily. A huge benefit is that the potential for the industry is still massive and, in these times where other industries and the economy are struggling, cannabis has the potential for huge economic advantages. As more countries around the world move to legalise cannabis, the global market opportunities for South Africa expand accordingly. A negative of working in this emerging market are the local laws as they stand, that can seem inconsistent and confusing, which is why it's important to have events like the cannabis expo where people can get accurate information about cannabis and the opportunities, as well as providing the industry and government with a platform to discuss how best to smooth out the regulations going forward.

■ ***What advice would you give to entrepreneurs wanting to succeed in the canna market?***

It's important to understand and work within what is legal in this country and the current regulatory framework. There are many exhibitors at The Cannabis Expo who specialise in cannabis law as well as assisting entrepreneurs and budding cannabis growers to navigate the evolving regulations. As you walk through the doors of the expo it becomes immediately apparent just how broad the legal cannabis industry already is here, and how huge the list of opportunities is. Dive right in and, most of all, have fun as cannabis is the most exciting industry in the world!

■ **What would you say are the biggest cannabis trends currently?**

After last year's effective de-scheduling of CBD in South Africa, and the global trend towards countries and states allowing the wide use of CBD, there are countless products, foods and drinks brands that have come onto the market containing CBD. From CBD-infused bottled water, coffee, sushi and burgers to top chefs experimenting with CBD in their restaurants – the CBD trend has exploded and shows no sign of abating. This expo in Cape Town will feature the Cannabis Food Market where visitors can try out all kinds of CBD-infused treats and wholesome foods in a relaxed outdoor market setting.

Expo tickets and convention delegate passes now available pre-sale on [Computicket](#).

Strictly, for those over 18 years of age and no babies or prams allowed.

Visit www.TheCannabisExpo.co.za for more information.

ABOUT RUTH COOPER

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