

SPECIAL ANALYSIS

When the Numbers Don't Add Up: USDA's Hemp Data Problem

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When the Numbers Don't Add Up: A Closer Look at USDA's Hemp Data Problem

By Brad Truman

There's a common phrase in business, and Lord knows we've all heard it: *garbage in, garbage out*. It means even the most sophisticated models, strategies, or decisions are only as good as the data they're built on. And if the data's no good? Well, then, everything else wobbles.

Recently, I've been digging into the USDA's *National Weekly Hemp Report for 2024* – the official publication meant to track and share pricing and import figures for the U.S. hemp industry. I did this exercise with the 2024 data because it's the only full year of data that currently exists. This task involved grabbing all the data from the USDA website, doing a few data tricks to extract that data from the pdfs, then importing it into a SQL database.

On the surface, it looks like a brief but well-structured report. It's certainly not a complicated data set. There are 9 columns and, on average, 100-ish rows per weekly report – not exactly unmanageable. But after spending time importing the 2024 reports into a SQL database and running a few basic queries, I uncovered a pattern of errors that – frankly – should never have made it out the door.

And before anyone dismisses this as nitpicking: I get it. Mistakes happen. As a career data analyst, I'm depressingly familiar with how the best laid plans can still completely whiff on delivering the organizational data euphoria that you planned for. I was more than happy to wave away a thing two but, what started as a standard input-data-output-dashboard project quickly turned into an exercise in spotting red flags. Within two hours, I had uncovered several issues that pointed to a lack of basic data hygiene, broken formulas, and plain old carelessness — the kind of mistakes that would be unacceptable in any professional setting, let alone from the USDA. Call me a jerk, but I feel like bar should be higher than “mostly right, most of the time.”

What I Found

I've done my best to explain the different types of errors, ranging from the annoying and insignificant to the alarming and large scale. Here are the main ones:

Random Instances of YTD Totals That Don't Add Up

The year-to-date (YTD) figures in the weekly reports are supposed to be cumulative — a running total of the weekly import numbers. But in at least a couple of instances, the YTD numbers take unexplained leaps.

For example, in the Hemp Fabric section of the July 3rd report, Belgium saw an increase in its YTD numbers (compared to the prior week's report) without any weekly values to explain that increase.

Hemp Imports (1)								
Values are whole U.S. dollars								
Hemp Fabric (HTS Code 5311004010)								
Country of Origin	Week Ending: 6/26/2024				2024 TOTAL TO DATE			
	Square Meters	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)	Square Meters	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)
BELGIUM	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	173	\$ 9,777	\$ 363	\$ 10,140
CHINA(MAINLAND)	1,127	\$ 6,006	\$ 185	\$ 6,191	162,403	\$ 300,329	\$ 6,617	\$ 306,946
FRANCE	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	265	\$ 5,837	\$ 56	\$ 5,893
INDIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	1,179	\$ 17,745	\$ 919	\$ 18,664
ITALY	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	5,058	\$ 69,425	\$ 3,095	\$ 72,520
ROMANIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	523	\$ 9,007	\$ 1	\$ 9,008
UNITED KINGDOM	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	1	\$ 910	\$ -	\$ 910
VIETNAM	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	9	\$ 97	\$ -	\$ 97
Grand Total	1,127	\$ 6,006	\$ 185	\$ 6,191	169,610	\$ 413,127	\$ 11,051	\$ 424,178

Hemp Imports (1)								
Values are whole U.S. dollars								
Hemp Fabric (HTS Code 5311004010)								
Country of Origin	Week Ending: 7/3/2024				2024 TOTAL TO DATE			
	Square Meters	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)	Square Meters	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)
BELGIUM	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	249	\$ 12,450	\$ 552	\$ 13,002
CHINA(MAINLAND)	2,240	\$ 14,444	\$ 3,599	\$ 18,043	164,643	\$ 314,773	\$ 10,216	\$ 324,989
FRANCE	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	265	\$ 5,837	\$ 56	\$ 5,893
INDIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	1,179	\$ 17,745	\$ 919	\$ 18,664
ITALY	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	5,058	\$ 69,425	\$ 3,095	\$ 72,520
NETHERLANDS	32	\$ 2	\$ 27	\$ 29	32	\$ 2	\$ 27	\$ 29
ROMANIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	523	\$ 9,007	\$ 1	\$ 9,008
UNITED KINGDOM	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	1	\$ 910	\$ -	\$ 910
VIETNAM	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	9	\$ 97	\$ -	\$ 97
Grand Total	2,272	\$ 14,446	\$ 3,626	\$ 18,072	171,958	\$ 430,246	\$ 14,866	\$ 445,112

Another example, also relating to the Hemp Fabric section: China, in the October 23rd report, shows no weekly values for the current week but shows a reduction of the YTD numbers from the prior week.

Hemp Imports (1)								
Values are whole U.S. dollars								
Hemp Fabric (HTS Code 5311004010)								
Country of Origin	Week Ending: 10/16/2024				2024 TOTAL TO DATE			
	Square Meters	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)	Square Meters	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)
BELGIUM	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	297	\$ 13,841	\$ 623	\$ 14,464
CHINA(MAINLAND)	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	189,021	\$ 465,475	\$ 12,456	\$ 477,931
FRANCE	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	894	\$ 9,649	\$ 81	\$ 9,730
INDIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	1,444	\$ 21,891	\$ 1,117	\$ 27,208
ITALY	0	\$ 5	\$ 1	\$ 6	9,270	\$ 134,703	\$ 5,317	\$ 134,730
NETHERLANDS	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	32	\$ 2	\$ 27	\$ 4
ROMANIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	769	\$ 15,195	\$ 2	\$ 15,260
THAILAND	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	64	\$ 3,390	\$ 65	\$ 3,390
UNITED KINGDOM	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	1	\$ 910	\$ -	\$ 910
VIETNAM	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	9	\$ 97	\$ -	\$ 97
Grand Total	0	\$ 5	\$ 1	\$ 6	201,801	\$ 665,153	\$ 19,688	\$ 684,841

Hemp Imports (1)								
Values are whole U.S. dollars								
Hemp Fabric (HTS Code 5311004010)								
Country of Origin	Week Ending: 10/23/2024				2024 TOTAL TO DATE			
	Square Meters	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)	Square Meters	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)
BELGIUM	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	297	\$ 13,841	\$ 623	\$ 14,464
CHINA(MAINLAND)	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	188,530	\$ 464,469	\$ 12,425	\$ 476,894
FRANCE	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	894	\$ 9,649	\$ 81	\$ 9,730
INDIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	1,444	\$ 21,891	\$ 1,117	\$ 27,283
ITALY	5	\$ 4,743	\$ 75	\$ 4,818	9,275	\$ 139,446	\$ 5,392	\$ 139,473
NETHERLANDS	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	32	\$ 2	\$ 27	\$ 4
ROMANIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	769	\$ 15,195	\$ 2	\$ 15,260
THAILAND	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	64	\$ 3,390	\$ 65	\$ 3,390
UNITED KINGDOM	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	1	\$ 910	\$ -	\$ 910
VIETNAM	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	9	\$ 97	\$ -	\$ 97
Grand Total	5	\$ 4,743	\$ 75	\$ 4,818	201,315	\$ 668,890	\$ 19,732	\$ 688,622

While there are more examples of this type of thing happening, I'm going to assume that these were just uncommunicated corrections. So, then why not put the corresponding corrected values in the weekly columns so that you can make sense of the YTD numbers decreasing? It's small and probably insignificant in the grand scheme of things but worthy of an eye roll.

Australia vs. Austria

In the June 19th report, *Australia* is listed in the *Hemp Twine* section. Starting the very next week, that line switches to *Austria* — but keeps the same YTD totals and continues as *Austria* in every report through the end of 2024. No new weekly values, just a country swap. That might sound like a harmless typo until you realize it means an entirely different nation is being represented.

Hemp Imports (1)								
Values are whole U.S. dollars								
Hemp Twine (HTS Code 5607902500)								
Country of Origin	Week Ending: 6/19/2024				2024 TOTAL TO DATE			
	Kilograms	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)	Kilograms	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)
AUSTRALIA	1	\$ 1	\$ 1	\$ 2	1	\$ 1	\$ 1	\$ 2
BRAZIL	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	22,702	\$ 47,925	\$ 4,344	\$ 52,269
BRITISH COLUMBIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	2	\$ 122	\$ 4	\$ 126

Hemp Imports (1)								
Values are whole U.S. dollars								
Hemp Twine (HTS Code 5607902500)								
Country of Origin	Week Ending: 6/26/2024				2024 TOTAL TO DATE			
	Kilograms	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)	Kilograms	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)
AUSTRIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	1	\$ 1	\$ 1	\$ 2
BRAZIL	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	22,702	\$ 47,925	\$ 4,344	\$ 52,269
BRITISH COLUMBIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	2	\$ 122	\$ 4	\$ 126

When I emailed Cornell and USDA about it, I received a reply from a representative at Cornell University, who kindly responded:

“Thanks for your email - and for spotting what looks like an anomaly in this report! Here at Cornell we only archive the reports that USDA-AMS publishes, so we aren't able to help you ascertain which is the correct country - though I suspect it is supposed to be Australia, based on the current reports and the fact that Australia is a far bigger producer of the crop than Austria (as far as I am aware).”

While I appreciated the response, it also highlighted the problem. **Cornell archives the reports. USDA produces them. But no one appears to be actively checking them.** (And USDA did not reply to my email.)

Inconsistent Country Names

Across the reports (and, in one instance, within the same report), the same countries are referred to by multiple names — sometimes with commas, sometimes with parentheses, sometimes abbreviated. For example:

- ALBERTA / ALBERTA, CANADA / ALBERTA, (CANADA)
- DOMINICAN REP. / DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
- CHINA (MAINLAND) / CHINA(MAINLAND)

Here’s the example of a country – Alberta, Canada – being represented two different ways in the same report. (Side note: I know Alberta, Canada is not a country – that’s just the way it’s represented in the ‘Country of Origin’ field in the reports.)

Hemp Imports (1)								
Values are whole U.S. dollars								
Oil Seed & Oleaginous Fruits, Broken or not, Hemp Seed for Sowing (HTS Code 1207990340)								
Country of Origin	Week Ending: 8/14/2024				2024 TOTAL TO DATE			
	Kilograms	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)	Kilograms	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)
ALBERTA, CANADA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	2,837	\$ 6,398	\$ 272	\$ 6,670
AUSTRALIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	39,900	\$ 229,915	\$ 10,000	\$ 239,915
BENIN	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	6	\$ 30	\$ 75	\$ 105

Hemp Imports (1)								
Values are whole U.S. dollars								
Oil Seed & Oleaginous Fruits, Broken or not, Hemp Seed for Consumption (HTS Code 1207990360)								
Country of Origin	Week Ending: 8/14/2024				2024 TOTAL TO DATE			
	Kilograms	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)	Kilograms	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)
ALBERTA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	4,570	\$ 39,529	\$ 600	\$ 40,129
AUSTRALIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	2	\$ 15	\$ 1	\$ 16
BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	10,510	\$ 104,443	\$ 518	\$ 104,961

At first glance, it might not seem like a big deal. Heck, in many ways, it’s not! But for anyone trying to view this data in aggregate (which I argue is absolutely critical for the industry and the reason why I’ve undertaken this exercise), it becomes a mess of manual clean-up. From a basic data integrity standpoint, this is just really amateur. Even in Excel,

there are basic ways to enforce consistent naming. Without taking steps to fix these inconsistencies ahead of time, they'll break joins and make aggregations (like sum and average) useless. I think this one irks me so much because of how blisteringly simple this is to avoid. These aren't subjective labeling choices — this is just not being bothered to adhere to the simplest degree of consistency. **I don't think it's too harsh to say that this kind of thing is so basic that, if it managed to make it into a presentation of any worth or value whatsoever, you'd be on the corporate don't-trust-anything-they-show-you list before you could blurt out "USDA".**

The Netherlands Vanishing Act

One of the clearest examples of sloppy data handling (and therefore incorrect information) in the USDA's National Weekly Hemp Report comes from the September 11th edition. In the Hemp Fabric section of the prior week's report (September 4), Netherlands is listed as a country of origin, showing small year-to-date totals.

Hemp Imports (1)								
Values are whole U.S. dollars								
Hemp Fabric (HTS Code 5311004010)								
Country of Origin	Week Ending: 9/4/2024				2024 TOTAL TO DATE			
	Square Meters	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)	Square Meters	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)
BELGIUM	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	297	\$ 13,841	\$ 623	\$ 14,464
CHINA(MAINLAND)	114	\$ 886	\$ 3	\$ 889	184,691	\$ 428,765	\$ 12,244	\$ 441,009
FRANCE	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	894	\$ 9,649	\$ 81	\$ 9,730
INDIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	1,444	\$ 21,891	\$ 1,117	\$ 23,008
ITALY	3,547	\$ 43,098	\$ 769	\$ 43,867	9,227	\$ 133,998	\$ 5,308	\$ 139,306
NETHERLANDS	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	32	\$ 2	\$ 27	\$ 29
ROMANIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	769	\$ 15,195	\$ 2	\$ 15,197
UNITED KINGDOM	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	1	\$ 910	\$ -	\$ 910
VIETNAM	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	9	\$ 97	\$ -	\$ 97
Grand Total	3,661	\$ 43,984	\$ 772	\$ 44,756	197,364	\$ 624,348	\$ 19,402	\$ 643,750

But in the September 11th report, Netherlands disappears entirely from the table. This was clearly a mistake, and its removal causes a chain reaction: the YTD values for Netherlands shift to Romania, YTD values for Romania shift to United Kingdom, YTD values for United Kingdom shift to Vietnam, and YTD values for Vietnam end up being displayed as the YTD

columns' Grand Total row.

Hemp Imports (1)								
Values are whole U.S. dollars								
Hemp Fabric (HTS Code 5311004010)								
Country of Origin	Week Ending: 9/11/2024				2024 TOTAL TO DATE			
	Square Meters	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)	Square Meters	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)
BELGIUM	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	297	\$ 13,841	\$ 623	\$ 14,464
CHINA(MAINLAND)	1,199	\$ 12,625	\$ 3	\$ 12,628	185,890	\$ 441,390	\$ 12,247	\$ 453,637
FRANCE	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	894	\$ 9,649	\$ 81	\$ 9,730
INDIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	1,444	\$ 21,891	\$ 1,117	\$ 23,008
ITALY	1	\$ 11	\$ 1	\$ 12	9,228	\$ 134,009	\$ 5,309	\$ 139,318
ROMANIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	32	\$ 2	\$ 27	\$ 29
UNITED KINGDOM	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	769	\$ 15,195	\$ 2	\$ 15,197
VIETNAM	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	1	\$ 910	\$ -	\$ 910
Grand Total	1,200	\$ 12,636	\$ 4	\$ 12,640	9	\$ 97	\$ -	\$ 97

The next week, in the September 18th report, Netherlands reappears as if nothing had happened, with the table restored to its prior format and values correctly representing the right country. There's no footnote, no correction notice, and no acknowledgement that the data for September 11 was scrambled. This kind of uncorrected, report-level error not only creates immediate confusion but also renders the affected week's data entirely unusable for any serious analysis.

Hemp Imports (1)								
Values are whole U.S. dollars								
Hemp Fabric (HTS Code 5311004010)								
Country of Origin	Week Ending: 9/18/2024				2024 TOTAL TO DATE			
	Square Meters	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)	Square Meters	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)
BELGIUM	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	297	\$ 13,841	\$ 623	\$ 14,464
CHINA(MAINLAND)	425	\$ 3,686	\$ 3	\$ 3,689	186,315	\$ 445,076	\$ 12,250	\$ 457,326
FRANCE	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	894	\$ 9,649	\$ 81	\$ 9,730
INDIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	1,444	\$ 21,891	\$ 1,117	\$ 27,201
ITALY	2	\$ 120	\$ 1	\$ 121	9,230	\$ 134,129	\$ 5,310	\$ 134,156
NETHERLANDS	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	32	\$ 2	\$ 27	\$ 4
ROMANIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	769	\$ 15,195	\$ 2	\$ 15,195
UNITED KINGDOM	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	1	\$ 910	\$ -	\$ 910
VIETNAM	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	9	\$ 97	\$ -	\$ 97
Grand Total	427	\$ 3,806	\$ 4	\$ 3,810	198,991	\$ 640,790	\$ 19,410	\$ 660,200

The April 17th Report: HUH?!

Umm... how is this a published report? I mean, WHAT? DEAR GOD, HOW? Ok.... I stepped away. I've meditated. I won't scream-type.

So, I started to notice some very strange numbers in the April 17th report. In an attempt to isolate the issue, I whipped up a quick SQL query that allowed me to compare the April 17th report values side-by-side with values from the two weeks before (April 3rd and April 10th) and the values from the two weeks after (April 24th, and May 1st). And, it helped me make sense of... absolutely nothing.

The **April 17th** report stands out as a complete, drop-dead, throw-away anomaly. In nearly every case:

- The *YTD* values **jump significantly and inexplicably** without any tie, relevance or relation to the *weekly* values.
- The out-of-whack YTD totals **don't carry forward** into the April 24th or May 1st reports, or *any* future reports for that matter.
- Instead, later reports – starting with April 24th – revert back to the YTD figures from April 10th – and continue on as if the April 17th report never happened.

Hemp Imports (1)								
Values are whole U.S. dollars								
Oil Seed & Oleaginous Fruits, Broken or not, Hemp Seed for Consumption (HTS Code 1207990360)								
Country of Origin	Week Ending: 4/10/2024				2024 TOTAL TO DATE			
	Kilograms	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)	Kilograms	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)
ALBERTA, CANADA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	1,996	\$ 22,452	\$ 250	\$ 22,702
AUSTRALIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	2	\$ 15	\$ 1	\$ 16
BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA	1,682	\$ 23,200	\$ 50	\$ 23,250	5,405	\$ 60,448	\$ 154	\$ 60,602
CHINA(MAINLAND)	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	60,118	\$ 210,984	\$ 9,523	\$ 220,507
COLOMBIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	10	\$ 1,379	\$ 411	\$ 1,790
LITHUANIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	1,020	\$ 5,554	\$ 100	\$ 5,654

Hemp Imports (1)								
Values are whole U.S. dollars								
Oil Seed & Oleaginous Fruits, Broken or not, Hemp Seed for Consumption (HTS Code 1207990360)								
Country of Origin	Week Ending: 4/17/2024				2024 TOTAL TO DATE			
	Kilograms	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)	Kilograms	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)
ALBERTA, CANADA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	55,882	\$ 102,960	\$ 400	\$ 103,360
BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	28,307	\$ 205,807	\$ 1,813	\$ 207,620
CHINA(MAINLAND)	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	118,191	\$ 599,865	\$ 22,103	\$ 621,968
COLOMBIA	18	\$ 3,600	\$ 250	\$ 3,850				
CZECH REPUBLIC	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	11	\$ 28	\$ 4	\$ 32
GERMANY, FED. REPUBLIC	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	224	\$ 514	\$ 65	\$ 579
LITHUANIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	173,231	\$ 1,805,517	\$ 45,602	\$ 1,851,119

Hemp Imports (1)								
Values are whole U.S. dollars								
Oil Seed & Oleaginous Fruits, Broken or not, Hemp Seed for Consumption (HTS Code 1207990360)								
Country of Origin	Week Ending: 4/24/2024				2024 TOTAL TO DATE			
	Kilograms	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)	Kilograms	Value	CIF Value (2)	Total Value (3)
ALBERTA, CANADA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	1,996	\$ 22,452	\$ 250	\$ 22,702
AUSTRALIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	2	\$ 15	\$ 1	\$ 16
BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	5,405	\$ 60,448	\$ 154	\$ 60,602
CHINA(MAINLAND)	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	60,118	\$ 210,984	\$ 9,523	\$ 220,507
COLOMBIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	28	\$ 4,979	\$ 661	\$ 5,640
FRANCE	7,837	\$ 110,978	\$ 1,200	\$ 112,178	7,837	\$ 110,978	\$ 1,200	\$ 112,178
LITHUANIA	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	1,020	\$ 5,554	\$ 100	\$ 5,654

This is a single example of the pattern that plays out repeatedly across *all market categories and countries*. While I have highlighted Lithuania in the above screenshots, you can compare values for Alberta, Canada, British Columbia, Canada, China and Colombia

as well. They each have utterly unexplainable jumps on the April 17th report that snap back to sanity in the April 24th report.

In my opinion, this completely invalidates the data from that week. And, I think you're being wildly forgiving if, after viewing the widespread what-the-f*** happening in this week's report, you still give credence to anything you see in any week's report after that.

This was where I stopped looking at the data. There's no point in attempting to find additional errors or inconsistencies because 1) I very likely would and, 2) the totality of these errors puts this data source (not just this week – this *entire* data set) well into the do-not-trust-for-ANY-business-purpose territory.

Why This Matters

If this were a private spreadsheet passed around a small team, these issues would be annoying but manageable. But this is the **USDA** — one of the most authoritative agricultural institutions in the world. The agency's data serves as a foundation for investment, policymaking, supply chain decisions, and media reporting.

And in the case of hemp, a federally legal crop that's still working to gain legitimacy, accurate data isn't just helpful — I'd dare to call it **mission critical**.

When that data is sloppy, contradictory, or simply wrong (like, *super wrong*) – and no one publicly corrects it – the message is clear: this industry isn't being taken seriously. And I think it's almost more damaging for a reputable and respected entity such as the USDA to be putting this stuff out. I mean, they clearly found it worth reporting. So, why not do a little better job making sure it's accurate. They have the clout and status that lends legitimacy to just about anything they undertake (I'm not saying they're batting 1000 but, generally, they're great at what they do.). That clout and legitimacy leads people to make decisions on this kind of data. And, when it's this easy to poke holes in their data, it means people might be making bad decisions – something those willing to invest in this industry really can't afford, at least if we want to see it reach its maximum potential. The hemp industry's success depends on honest reporting and double-checked data, and I would posit that the USDA should be at the top of the chain providing that quality data.

What Needs to Happen

It's a bit frustrating to see these kinds of mistakes being made at this level. And I'm not writing this to take cheap shots or be a data diva. I'm writing it because I care about the future of hemp — and because I know how *easy* some of these fixes could be.

Here's what USDA should implement immediately:

- **Basic data validation:** Prevent obvious outliers or reversions from slipping through.
- **Consistent naming conventions:** Enforce uniform country names.
- **Public changelogs:** If a mistake is made, own it – and note it clearly in the report archive. Same for true-ups or updates – let people know what changes have been made and why.
- **Responsive communication:** If stakeholders reach out about errors, someone should answer.
- **Partner with someone *ahem* whose expertise it is to do this right.**

The hemp industry doesn't need razor sharp, precise data. But it does need **data that tries a little harder to be correct**, not data that feels like an afterthought.

We can't build a strong market on weak foundations. If the USDA wants to be a trusted partner in hemp's future, it starts with one simple thing:

Get the very uncomplicated data more right.