

Italian army to grow medical marijuana

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The Italian army is aiming high with its latest weapon on the medical front: marijuana.

The ministers of defence and health signed a deal Thursday for a joint project to produce cannabis derivative drugs for [pain relief](#).

The famous spiky-leafed plants—more associated with peace-loving hippies than crew-cut soldiers—will be cultivated and treated at a military pharmaceutical plant in Florence.

"The aim is to produce medicine for extremely serious pathologies, such as multiple sclerosis, or for pain relief," health minister Beatrice Lorenzin told a press conference. "The project has no ideological or cultural value, it's just in the interest of the sick."

The project should produce around 80 to 100 kilos (176 to 220 pounds) of active principle—the extract from [marijuana](#) plants used in medicines—each year.

Defence minister Roberta Pinotti said the Italian military's medical skills are "often unsung or underestimated. In Florence we have everything we need to begin production."

While the use of marijuana for medical purposes was legalised in Italy at the beginning of the 1990s, this will be the first [project](#) to grow it for medicine.

"One gram of active principle costs 15 euros (\$19.30) imported. We are certain that the medicines we will be able to produce locally will cost tax payers less than half the amount they currently do," Lorenzin said.

In addition to taking a pot shot at the [medical marijuana](#) sphere, the Italian army pharmaceutical plant produces several other medicines, cosmetics and even spirits.

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