



Armando Avila takes sealed packages of hops pellets off the conveyor belt for packaging at the YCH HOPS warehouse in Yakima, Wash.

David Leder
For the Capital Press

Hops supplier looks to **bright future**

By **DAVE LEDER**
For the Capital Press

It's still a good time to be involved in the hops industry.

With the worldwide explosion of craft breweries and home brewing in recent years, this is an especially good time for hops businesses in Washington's Yakima Valley, home to 75 percent of the total hops acreage in the U.S.

In recent years, the region has supplanted Germany as the world's leading hops producer, and a number of Central Washington companies are intent on continuing that trend.

"The industry is at an all-time high, as brewers from around the world continue to explore the art of beer and find new ways to incorporate American hops, known for their aroma and flavor," said Alex Rumbolz, the communications and outreach manager for YCH HOPS, the leading hops supplier in North America.

"What has helped us stand out is our ongoing relationships with international brewers, as well as the independent craft breweries and home brewers, many of whom could be the global innovators of tomorrow."

The YCH HOPS brand was established in 2014, when Yakima Chief Inc. and Hopunion LLC joined forces. The 100 percent grower-owned hop supplier has

developed a reputation in the international brewing community for its commitment to quality and service, from the farm to the production warehouse to the sales office.

YCH HOPS has become known around the industry for its long-term vision, staying one step ahead of the competition with innovations like Cryo Hops, a proprietary cryogenic hops processing technology introduced in 2017 that contributes to the creation of more "hop-forward" beers.

"Craft brewers are artists and they are always looking for that unique 'color' in their palette to create new flavors and aromas in their creations," Rumbolz said. "We let the brewers be the rock stars as we try to focus on the role of supporting their creativity with great hops."

YCH HOPS packs about 90 percent of its hops pellets at a production facility in Sunnyside, about 30 miles east of Yakima, and operates warehouse facilities in Yakima.

The company produces and ships hops products for dozens of growers around the Yakima Valley, including Sunnyside, Moxee (about six miles east of Yakima) and the Yakama Nation Reservation (between Yakima and Sunnyside).

YCH HOPS believes the market conditions are ideal for additional growth in the years to come, but at the same

time, the company recognizes the potential challenges, such as market saturation.

"The craft beer industry can be unpredictable at times, with varying tastes and consumer demands fluctuating throughout the year," Rumbolz said. "This is a challenge that all hops growers and suppliers face, and we are committed to providing our growers with the most accurate forecasts possible prior to each growing season."

By prioritizing relationships with its growers and customers, YCH HOPS expects to remain at the forefront of the hops industry, no matter what changes may arise. The company is always looking for ways that it can improve the brewing experience for everyone involved.

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