

Crosby Hops: Five generations of farmers

By ALIYA HALL
For the Capital Press

WOODBURN, Ore. — Blake Crosby is a fifth-generation farmer at Crosby Hops, where he's carrying on the family tradition and taking the company in new directions.

"From a young age, I saw this potential in the family business and felt the same spirit in the craft brewing industry, which made the decision easy to go all-in on building the next generation of Crosby Hops," he said.

Crosby Hops is a vertically integrated hop grower, processor and merchant in Woodburn, Ore., with 600 acres. The business also formed the TopWire Hop Project, a beer garden on their property that features a tap list of collaborations brewed by Crosby Hops customers.

Crosby Hops started in the early 1900s when Albert Crosby planted the first hops. Since then, the Crosbys have continued to embrace modernization and innovation.

In 2012, Blake Crosby saw a new direction for the business.

"The needs of craft brewers have changed dramati-



Blake Crosby is the fifth generation to operate Crosby Hops. In 2012, he had a vision to move away from the highly commoditized hop business with a hyper-focus on specialized hops processed on site.

cally over the last 10 years," he said. "I had a vision that included building a Crosby brand and direct sales relationships with craft brewers instead of traditional hop dealers."

This investment also included the hop pellet processing facility, which produces Type 90 hop pellets.

"With flavor and aroma hops from the Pacific Northwest specifically becoming the centerpiece of beers around the world, the focus on hop quality is more important than ever," Crosby said.

The challenge now, he added, is how to grow and process hops to meet the ever-changing demand.

As a business that grows, processes and sells hops,

Crosby Hops has a streamlined operation. They use a unique cooling and oxygen limit process — different from the typical process. It progressively chills their hops during the most critical steps of the pelleting process.

Crosby Hops were also early adopters of the soft pellet technology, which uses less pressure at the die when pellets are formed.

Sustainability is also an important part of the business. In 2016, Crosby Hops was the first supplier in the craft beer industry to attain the Certified B Corp. status, which means "we balance profit with purpose to be a force for good," Crosby said.



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