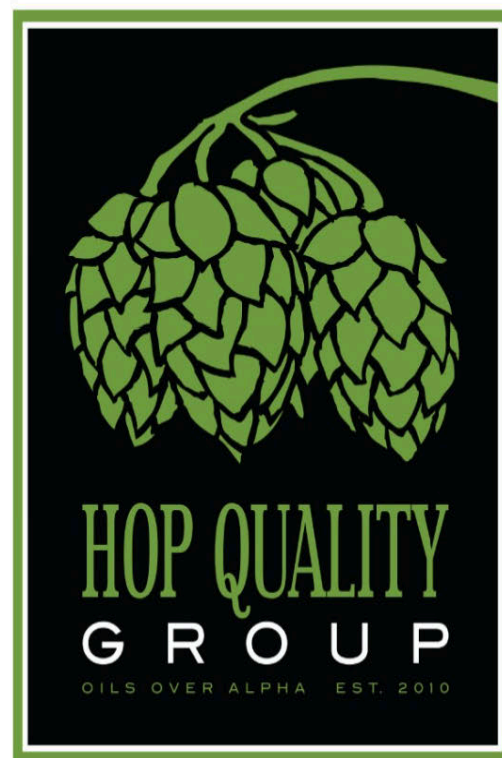


HQG Visit Date:	8/18/21
Farm/Facility:	VFG
Picker Name & Grower Number(s):	Virgil Gamache Farms INC WA358 (Congdon Orchards INC WA337)
Grower Name & Phone:	Darren Gamache – VGF Dick Woodin - Congdon
Physical Address of Farm/Facility:	6371 Fort Rd, Toppenish, WA 98948
Email Address:	darren@vgfinc.com dick@congdonorchards.com
Picker Type(s) & Description:	4 Perrault Front End Pickers; 1 Dauenhauer
Merchant Partners/Direct/Both?	Visited with HAAS



HQG Attendee & Brewery	
Jeremy Moynier – Stone Brewing	Steve Luke – Cloudburst Brewing
Teddy Gowan – Societe Brewing Company	
Karsten McDonell – Sierra Nevada Brewing Company	Hunter Van de Graaf - HAAS

Operations Description:

<p>Picker: 4 Perrault Front End Pickers outside (customized); 1 Dauenhauer inside. Updated in 2016. 7-8 acres per hr. Magnet at end of picking (Magnet at baler as well). 24/7. Dauenhauer Picker in building: no catwalks. Keep people safe and out of the way of the machine. Dauenhauer has recipe programming. Magnet at end of cleaners.</p>
<p>Kiln: New burners are propane and have automation. Old burners are low Sulphur diesel – will replace old ones as they upgrade and tweak automation on new ones. Looking to do a whole new kiln in 2 – 3 years. 140 F drying. Will adjust depth depending on density of cone. Had Hop Tech in kiln but took it out because it didn't communicate with their PLC.</p>
<p>Conditioning Building: (old kiln building from 1933). All wood. Push-mules to scoop hops. Lights have sheath coverings. Some LED lights in newer part of old building. Takes around 5 hours to empty conditioning rooms. Have to wear booties walking anywhere hops are in this building. Automation for conveyors. Also has cold storage.</p>
<p>VGF Lab: Now testing QR codes for tracking! Future plan is this will be the traceability system. They do thiol and terpene testing. Hop Technic program. *Amazing sampling method tracking for picking (more Thiol driven than Terpene). Can track samplers out in field via lab (computer/phone). Starting to look at smoke taint. The work they are doing on real time thiol analysis in order to effect harvest windows, as well as using their tracking system to analyze changes over previous harvests is very, very exciting!</p>

Areas of Concern:

Exposed Perrault pickers outside.
Diesel fuel for some kiln burners.
Contact with hops in old building (conditioning).

Improvements since last HQG visit (if applicable):

Kiln burners being updated (and to propane).
Updated automation.
Lab continues to upgrade with equipment and in-depth testing. Tracking and QR code system being tested is very, very exciting!

Recommendations:

For outside Perrault Pickers, it sounds like there hasn't been any issues with birds, etc (similar to field picking). Think about ways to button those up during off season (cover).
Nice to hear about conversion for kiln burners away from diesel.
Old building is always amazing to see! Many farms like you, scoop hops after conditioning – just think of ways to limit contact.

Additional Comments:

What hop varieties are grown? Acreage? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• VGF: Amarillo, Saaz, Hallertau, Zeus, Cashmere, +. 1600 acres (1200 hops and 400 grapes). Congdon: tree fruit farmer who got into hops. 75% Amarillo and 25% Citra. Congdon grows and sells to VFG and hops are sold under VGF.
Does Grower plan any major upgrades in the near future? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updating kiln burners and full kiln upgrade in 2- 3 years.
Does Grower operate multiple facilities? If yes, how many? Facility names and locations (grower numbers)? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operations in Germany.
Does Grower custom pick for anyone else? If yes, who? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Buys hops from Congdon and processes. Also does some other custom picking.
What certifications does the grower possess, if any? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• FSMA, Global GAP, Salmon Safe
Additional Comments about the operation? <p>HQG very much appreciates your request to have us come again this year (sorry we couldn't do it last year because of COVID!). You have a strong commitment to producing quality hops and it's easy to see that commitment through the passion of the VGF Team. Your farm is a cool mix of really high tech along with some classic historical space. The lab is at another level and we could have spent the day just in there! It's exhilarating to see you investing in the systems to better track and understand your hops!</p>

- We also appreciate having Dick Woodin from Congdon present to learn about his commitment to quality hops. Thanks for the time and have a great Harvest!