



Brewing the Future:

A look into the Charles Faram Hop Development Programme

In the world of craft brewing, the humble hop holds a revered status. These green, cone-shaped fruits not only add bitterness, flavour, and aroma to beer but also contribute to its complexity and character. Understanding the importance of hops in the brewing process, Charles Faram, a prominent hop merchant, established the Charles Faram Hop Development Programme. This initiative represents a groundbreaking effort to advance hop cultivation, breeding, and innovation, ultimately contributing to the future of hop growing in the UK.

The Genesis of the Programme

The programme emerged from a few hop plants grown in a hopyard at the back of local hop agronomist Peter Glendinning's house. Back in 2009 he handpicked a small sample of the cones and put it in front of Charles Faram MD, Paul Corbett for him to assess. When Peter suggested he had grown it in his back field Paul thought he was joking as it had such a pronounced "new world" aroma. From this conversation the hop and the name "Jester" were born. Recognizing the evolving tastes and preferences of brewers worldwide, Charles Faram and Peter Glendinning then embarked on a journey to create new hop varieties that would cater to contemporary brewing trends.



Cultivation and Breeding

At the heart of the programme lies a meticulous process of hop cultivation and breeding. Traditional methods had meant that it took ten years to get a variety to the stage where it could be released commercially; with their newest variety, Harlequin®, Farams have taken just five. The process involves crossbreeding different hop cultivars to create hybrids that exhibit desirable traits such as disease resistance, high yields, and unique flavour profiles. Testing has been thorough but getting hops to market this quickly involves taking risks. There will undoubtedly be failures.



Collaborative Partnerships

Central to the success of the programme is its emphasis on collaboration. Charles Faram collaborates with hop growers, breweries, academic institutions, and agricultural organisations worldwide to exchange knowledge, resources, and expertise.

Brewers play a pivotal role in the programme, providing valuable feedback on experimental hop varieties through brewing trials and sensory evaluations (Aromafests®). This direct engagement with the brewing community enables Charles Faram to tailor its breeding efforts to the preferences and requirements of brewers, resulting in hops that resonate with consumers.

Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship

In an era marked by increasing environmental concerns, sustainability is a core principle of the programme. Farams prioritises the development of hop varieties that are resilient to climate change and require minimal inputs such as water and pesticides. By promoting sustainable agricultural practices, Charles Faram aims to minimise the ecological footprint of hop cultivation while ensuring the long-term viability of the industry.



Looking Ahead

As beer recipes continue to unfold, the Charles Faram Hop Development Programme remains committed to pushing the boundaries of hop cultivation and innovation. Look out for beers featuring trail hops, denoted by "CF" then three or four digits, to evaluate these new varieties. All feedback is gratefully received.

