

HOPSTEINER – NEWSLETTER

May 2009

- Market -



Development of alpha acids

Increased demand for hops worldwide for many years has resulted in the breeding of hop plants and consequent development of new varieties with ever increasing alpha acid concentrations. This trend was accompanied by the introduction of 2 new classifications, one called “High-Alpha varieties”, the other called “Super-High-Alpha varieties”.

Since 1980, the average of all alpha-acid contents has increased by about 65%. This year’s average alpha concentration of 8.6% represents an all-time high (see figure 1):

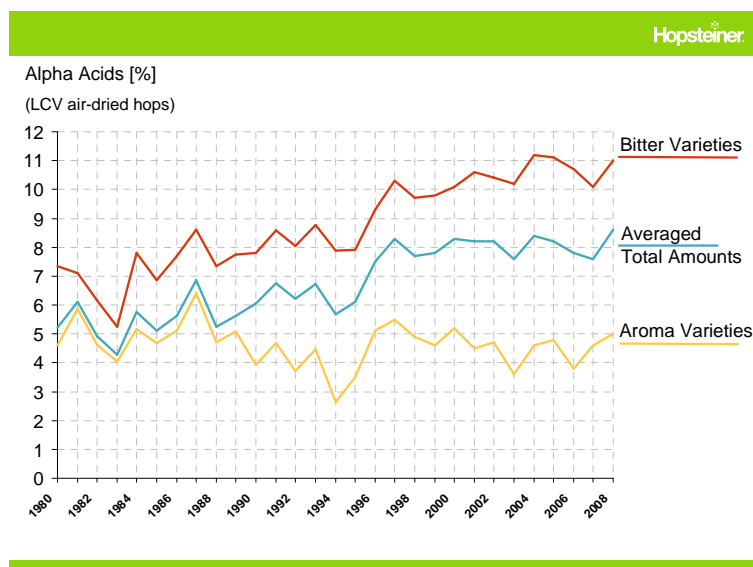


Figure 1: Development of alpha acids since 1980

There are many highs and lows, due mostly to weather conditions, but the trend towards higher alpha values is evident. During the mid-nineties the average alpha-acid content of hops rose considerably, due to the introduction of the bitter varieties Magnum and Taurus in Germany as replacements for Northern Brewer and Brewers Gold. At the same time the US industry started growing the varieties Columbus, Tomahawk and Zeus.

Two new aroma varieties, Tradition and Select, were introduced at the same time, largely replacing lower-alpha aroma varieties such as Hersbrucker.

In the USA a second generation of “super-high-alpha hop varieties” is gradually replacing the first generation of high-alpha bitter varieties and a further increase in alpha acid concentrations can be expected.