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Extreme heat cuts Germany’s 2026 hop harvest by 20%

Industry groups said low alpha acid levels could leave brewers 650 metric tons short in 2027, with aroma hops most exposed

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Germany’s hop harvest fell sharply in 2026, raising concerns about supplies of some brewing varieties for 2027 after a summer of extreme heat and drought cut yields and lowered alpha acid levels.

The German Hop Growers Association and the German Hop Industry Association said at a press conference on Wednesday, November 11, at the BrauBeviale trade fair in Nuremberg that this year's harvest totaled about 34,500 metric tons. That was about 20% less than in 2025, when Germany produced 43,141 metric tons.

The groups said the weak harvest was driven mainly by unusual heat and persistent dryness during the summer. In the Hallertau, Germany's main hop-growing region, 46 hot days were recorded between May and August, about three times as many as in earlier years, while rainfall was only about half the usual level.

Beyond the smaller crop, the industry said the low alpha acid content is a major concern. Germany's alpha acid production, a key factor for brewers because it affects bitterness and brewing performance, was about 30% below the level of an average harvest. The weaker supply of both volume and brewing compounds could complicate purchasing and recipe planning for beer producers, especially those that rely on specific aroma profiles.

The production losses are also expected to weigh heavily on growers' finances. Adi Schapfl, president of the German Hop Growers Association, said revenue for German hop farmers is likely to be about 70 million to 80 million euros lower than in recent years. At the same time, farms are facing higher production costs. Schapfl said hop cultivation in 2026 had become a loss-making business on many fields and at many operations.

The decline was not limited to Germany. According to the industry groups, hop production across the European Union came to about 46,000 metric tons, down 20% from a year earlier. Global production was estimated at roughly 97,300 metric tons, an 11% drop.

Looking ahead to the 2027 brewing year, the German Hop Industry Association said the market is likely to face tighter conditions even though demand for alpha acids is still edging lower. It said the available volume of alpha acids is expected to fall clearly short of calculated demand for the first time since 2018, with an estimated deficit of about 650 metric tons.

The pressure, however, is not expected to be spread evenly across the market. The association said actual shortages are likely to be concentrated in aroma and fine aroma hop varieties, while high-alpha varieties still have large carryover inventories from previous years. For brewers, that could mean that some styles or brand recipes become harder or more expensive to maintain, even if the broader market still holds excess stocks in other categories.

Stephan Schinagl, who became the new first chairman of the German Hop Industry Association in October, said poor harvests do not create a lasting correction in the market and instead create uncertainty. He called for wider use of climate-resilient hop varieties, more targeted adjustments in planted area and reliable contracts between the hop sector and breweries to protect long-term supply.

Schapfl also warned that if hop prices remain low, more growers may leave the business and more acreage may be taken out of production. He said prices for many varieties still do not cover costs despite the weak harvest, increasing concern that what is now oversupply in some parts of the market could turn into undersupply over the medium term.