

**TORO****Count on it.**

# Grower Solutions

## Drip Irrigation Helps Hops Grower Sleep at Night!

Weilmunster Farms, Parma, Idaho

## Benefits of Drip on Hops:

- Quick payback on system cost
- Yield increase of 400 pounds per acre
- Water use reduced in half
- Fertilizer use greatly reduced
- Fertigation allowed spoon feeding of nutrients
- Fewer weeds
- Elimination of sidedressing and corrugating for rill irrigation
- No dry down period required after irrigation
- No siphon tubes to steal



Jon Weilmunster,  
Weilmunster Farms,  
Parma, Idaho



Jon Weilmunster has roots in farming, but didn't buy his first hops yard until 2002. His commitment to work long hours, seven days a week during the growing season is a lifestyle common to many growers, but the burden has somewhat been eased by adopting a high quality drip irrigation system from Clearwater Supply. "It was basically a question of whether I wanted to stay awake worrying all summer, or sleep at night."

### Growers Listen to Growers

Weilmunster's friends in Washington helped mentor him, and shared their recipe for success: composting and drip irrigation. "The compost works like a blanket, making the soil warm and moist which is important in the beginning of the season", explains Weilmunster. Drip had been tried on hops 20 years ago in the Treasure Valley's deep silt loam soils, but failed due to lack of service on the initial systems. So when his Washington friends asked in amazement, "How do you grow hops without drip?", Weilmunster began searching for a drip company.

**"Toro BlueLine delivers excellent wetting patterns, but best of all, everything worked great the first time I turned the system on."**

Of course Washington and his friends' drip supplier are located over four hours away, so a local friend referred Jon to Jim Klauzer of Clearwater Supply. "I called Jim on a Saturday, and by Monday evening he had a quote ready for me." The initial system cost \$1,300 per acre for 105 acres, and included the pump, dropping in three phase power, all the components of the drip system, trenching and labor. But the cost was quickly offset by yield increases and cost reductions. "We experienced a 400 lb per acre increase in production using drip, which translates into about \$800 - \$1,600 per acre increased revenue. In addition, we have cut water use in half from four acre feet to two, we no longer run a sidedresser at \$20 per acre, we no longer have to corrugate for rill irrigation at about \$20 per acre, and we have far fewer weeds to worry about. On top of that, our fertilizer bill has been reduced in half which is worth at least \$40 per acre or more."

"There were obviously some adjustments," continued Weilmunster. "Laborers have to pick up the dripline at the end of the season so we can cross disk, and three phase power had to be brought in. But I never

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have to wait for furrows to dry down before accessing the field, and there are no siphon tubes to steal.” Since the government is interested in helping growers use water more efficiently, Weilmunster worked with the local NRCS office and participated in both water saving and erosion prevention programs.

### Local Dealer Support

What’s more, Weilmunster is happy he didn’t develop a long distance relationship with his Washington friend’s drip supplier. “Clearwater’s local presence has been a HUGE benefit, along with the quality, made in the USA products that Toro supplies.” Clearwater designed the system with Toro’s premium Blue-Line Dripline which contains a factory pre-installed .5 gph emitter every 24 inches. “BlueLine delivers excellent wetting patterns

down my 1,250’ runs that are planted with hops 42 inches apart on 14 foot centers”, explained Weilmunster. “But best of all, everything worked great the first time I turned the system on, which is a big contrast to what some neighbors experienced who used other products from other companies!”

Other high quality components were specified as well. Variable frequency drive motors were chosen to help save energy and ensure proper system pressure, and moisture sensors were installed to make it easier to track soil moisture. “By monitoring the graph and spot checking actual soil moisture and crop appearance, Jon has scheduled irrigations on an average three day interval during peak consumptive use periods in the summer,” explains Klauzer.

“This is in contrast to a typical six day interval, on alternate sides of the row, with conventional rill irrigated fields.” In addition, a fertigation system injects acidic fertilizers through the drip system precisely when needed, lowering the water pH from about 8.0 to 5.0 at the same time. “These upgrades allow spoon feeding in an



efficient manner, avoiding water and fertilizer waste or unwanted stress.”

Weilmunster plans to expand his drip acreage, and appreciates the attention that Jon Small, Toro’s District Manager, and Jim Klauzer have provided during the decision making process. “Toro has made me feel like I’m part of the team, and that I’m a team player.” And judging by the harvest, the season was a home run.



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The Toro Company  
Micro-Irrigation Business  
1588 N. Marshall Avenue, El Cajon, CA 92020-1523, USA  
Tel: +1 (800) 333-8125 or +1 (619) 562-2950  
Fax: +1 (800) 892-1822 or +1 (619) 258-9973

[www.toromicroirrigation.com](http://www.toromicroirrigation.com)

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