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Since early 2019, local producers have been working closely with NABC ,WSU Extension, and the University of Oregon to explore developing a small grain economy, particularly malting barley, in western Washington. This work, and the dedication of a group of regional growers led to the formation of the Southwest Washington Growers Cooperative, dedicated to enhancing the success of family farms through collaborative opportunities.

Continued collaboration between the Southwest Washington Grower's Cooperative, the Port of Chehalis, Great Western Malting Company, and the Northwest Agriculture Business Center has led to another successful barley harvest in the region.

When local processors ceased to contract with SW WA farmers to grow peas and corn in the region, malting barley was determined to be a suitable alternative crop. In 2020, the grower's cooperative harvested 178 acres of malting barley. This included 115 acres of winter barley and 63 acres of spring barley. This year the cooperative harvested 1005 acres of malting barley. Final harvest numbers for this year are not all in yet, but based on preliminary data we expect to provide more than 2500 tons of malting barley to Great Western Malting Company.

Malting barley is currently loaded directly into railcars at a rail spur in the Port of Chehalis. This does create a bottleneck at harvest but plans for a grain handling and storage facility located at the Port of Chehalis are in the works. This facility will support an ever-growing grain economy that has the potential to flourish while creating future agricultural opportunities in the region.