



## Knowledge grows

# 50 years of Yara Brunsbüttel – where the molecule that feeds half the world is made

Brunsbüttel, June 10, 2026

The Yara plant in Brunsbüttel marks its 50th anniversary today. What began on June 10, 1976, under the name Veba Chemie has evolved into one of Europe's most significant chemical production sites—and is positioning itself as a pioneer of climate-neutral industry. "For 50 years, we have been producing essential materials here in Brunsbüttel—products that are fundamental to Germany and Europe. Today marks the beginning of the next 50," says Managing Director Sven Kohnke.

### From farmland to industrial hub

Few would have predicted that one of Germany's largest chemical plants would rise at the mouth of the River Elbe. For decades, Schleswig-Holstein's west coast was defined by agriculture—cabbage fields, grain, and cattle. That changed dramatically in the 1970s, when a wave of industrial development swept through the region, transforming it within a few short years.

Founded in 1976, Veba Chemie was among the early arrivals. Today, under the Yara name, it stands as one of the defining pillars of the region's industrial landscape.

The site has undergone multiple transformations since its founding. Following successive stages as Chemische Werke Hüls, AMH Chemie Oil, and—with its acquisition by Norsk Hydro in August 1985—Hydro Agri Brunsbüttel GmbH, the plant expanded continuously. In 2004, the spin-off of Norsk Hydro's fertilizer division gave the site its current name: Yara.

### The power of a small molecule

At the heart of the plant is a single molecule: ammonia ( $\text{NH}_3$ ). With a production capacity of up to 2,200 tonnes per day, Brunsbüttel operates Europe's largest single-train ammonia facility.

Yet ammonia's importance extends far beyond chemistry. At Yara Brunsbüttel, it serves as a building block for a wide range of essential products: AdBlue, which reduces nitrogen oxide emissions from trucks and passenger vehicles; urea used in medical technology, including insulin production; and raw materials for explosives vital to mining, tunneling, and construction.

It is also the foundation of nitrogen-based fertilizers—and therefore a cornerstone of global food production. Roughly half of the world's population depends on food grown using ammonia-based fertilizers. Without processes like those in Brunsbüttel, modern agriculture on a global scale would not be possible.

Technologically, the site stands apart. Instead of the conventional steam reforming process, it relies on partial oxidation (POX), offering greater operational flexibility.

"Brunsbüttel stands as a key pillar of Yara's production system – delivering reliability today while enabling the technologies needed for tomorrow," says Johan Labby, EVP Global Production at Yara International.

### **Scaling up while cutting emissions**

Today, Brunsbüttel ranks among Yara's most important global sites. Since February 2018, it has been home to the world's largest AdBlue production facility, with an annual capacity of 1.1 million tonnes—enough to meet around half of Europe's demand. The €28 million project marked the largest single investment in the plant's history. Its 178-metre chimney is the tallest structure in Schleswig-Holstein.

At the same time, the plant has steadily reduced its environmental footprint over the past decades. Growth and decarbonization do not have to be mutually exclusive, Managing Director Sven Kohnke demonstrates clearly: "We have reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by around 40 percent compared to 2010 levels. Since 2023, the electrification of a compressor alone has cut emissions by 90,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year, and many additional projects are currently in the pipeline."

One of the plant's particular strengths lies in its long-standing commitment to vocational training: More than half of the approximately 250 employees completed their professional training at the site. "Yara is not only an employer but also a part of home for many families in our city—a driver of development, innovation, and cohesion. Yara is a reliable partner; the trust-based cooperation is a great pleasure," said Martin Schmedtje, Mayor of Brunsbüttel. Romain Weckel, Mayor of the municipality of Büttel, added: "As the largest company in Büttel, Yara has an impact that extends far beyond the boundaries of the plant and resonates throughout the region. Suppliers from Büttel generate significant economic value through Yara, thereby contributing to the prosperity of the host community."

### **Critical infrastructure in critical times — future-focused**

Security of supply is not an abstract concept. A look at the year 2026, marked by the conflict in the Middle East and the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, underscores once again the vulnerability of global supply chains. Brunsbüttel has long been part of Germany's critical infrastructure, benefiting from one of the most strategically advantageous locations in Europe, where the North Sea and the Kiel Canal meet, and where maritime shipping intersects with inland waterways and land transport. Stability is backed up by the Norwegian parent company Yara International ASA, one of the world's largest fertilizer producers and the leading global trader of ammonia, with its own fleet and worldwide sourcing network—serving as a stabilizing anchor even in times of crisis.

"I congratulate Yara on the 50th anniversary of the Brunsbüttel plant. Yara is a key company for Schleswig-Holstein and an important partner in our development toward becoming the first climate-neutral industrial state—with the import terminal, what is already Europe's largest hydrogen production facility, and everything that is created here, made in Brunsbüttel," said Joschka Knuth, State Secretary at the Ministry for Energy Transition, Climate Protection, Environment and Nature.

## **50 years of Yara Brunsbüttel**

This means five decades of shift work in the Wilstermarsch, of training and innovation, and of reliability in a region that once could not have imagined becoming one of Europe's leading chemical hubs. Today, the milestone is celebrated - with employees, neighbors, and guests from politics and industry, over coffee and cake, and with an eye firmly on the future. Congratulations to everyone who has helped shape the site into what it is today.

---

### **Press contact:**

Yara Germany

Mechthild Mohr

[mechthild.mohr@yara.com](mailto:mechthild.mohr@yara.com)

+49 151 169 54754

### **About Yara:**

Yara is a global leader in crop nutrition and ammonia with a mission to responsibly feed the world and protect the planet.

Yara operates a global, flexible production system that delivers a diversified portfolio of nitrogen-based products. With our extensive global market reach and more than a century of agronomic knowledge and continuous innovation, we partner across the value chain to improve crop yields, optimize resource use, and reduce environmental impact.

Through diversified energy exposure and profitable decarbonization efforts, Yara is uniquely positioned to strengthen industrial competitiveness and create long-term value for customers, shareholders, employees, and society at large.

Founded in Norway in 1905, Yara operates in over 60 countries and serves more than 140 markets, employing about 15,700 people. In 2025, Yara reported revenues of USD 15.7 billion.

For more information, visit [Yara.com](https://www.yara.com).