



SFF Project 404831 Milestone M06 Regional Field Days Report – March 2017

Increasing the Market Share for New Zealand Olive Oil

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Introduction

The purpose of the Sustainable Farming Fund project is:

To increase the market share for New Zealand produced olive oil by identifying basic grove management practices to enable the industry to consistently lift productivity of fruit per hectare and thus also reduce costs. This will allow the New Zealand industry to compete effectively with imported olive oils to increase market share.

The objectives to achieve the purpose are aimed at practice changes that enhance tree and grove productivity.

The methods use expert tree crops horticultural advice focusing in two key aspects of grove management.

1. Improving tree health by disease control using affordable protectant spray programmes to eliminate foliage diseases that defoliate olive trees, a primary cause of low productivity in NZ groves.
2. Introducing practical, affordable tree pruning regimes that improve light distribution for stimulating flowering and fruit growth, aiding effective spray coverage and inducing adequate annual shoot growth to provide the required bud sites for new flower production – on an annual basis.

This milestone report outlines the progress and information assembled from the second round of grove visits and field days held in March 2017 conducted within the SFF project plan. The visits were carried out by the two consultants engaged as part of the projects; one from Plant and Food Research and one from Forty Groves Ltd.

It is apparent from this round of visits that the Focus Groves have responded very positively to the proactive spraying programme and pruning regime. This is reflected in new growth, healthier trees and good crop loads. Attendees at the Field Days, who have not adopted the programme, have conversely reported that their crop loads are sparse.

Focus Grove Field Day Minutes

– Prepared by Regional Chairs/Secretaries/Project Participants

Nelson Focus Grove Field Day

Held at Kakariki Olives on 9th March 2017.

Present were Stuart Tustin and Andrew Taylor (consultants), John and Helen Dunlop - Focus Grove hosts, Chris Smith from The Grove Supply Co, 18 Nelson olive growers with apologies for 7 others. The Focus Grove report presented here was prepared by the local Olives NZ chairperson.

All the trees pruned on the first meeting in October 2016 were looked at again. It was noted that all the Frantoio pruned at the end of October had all responded with new growth at the pruning site.

The leaf health was noted as being much improved with good 2 year old leaf coverage everywhere there was good spray coverage. Any disease or leaf yellowing was mainly in the three year old leaves and in the higher branches where spray has not been able to reach. It was noted that a new sprayer had been purchased with much better coverage to be expected, particularly to the higher branches. Only four sprays have been carried out with the new sprayer.

Fruit coverage is very good with an estimated crop loading in the 50 tonne region for the whole grove. Some of the Frantoio were very heavily cropped with loading in excess of 30 kg.

The trees are still too high for 100% effective spraying. Some discussion was held and it was agreed that the current policy of pruning with crop management in mind was still the best way forward. Stuart noted that the good extension growth for next year's crop together with the good crop this year was going to help slow down the vertical growth in the trees. This means it will be several more years before the grove is in a shorter renewal cycle, with the crop loading potential continuing to be affected by the heavy renewal pruning carried out post-harvest.

Minimal secondary pruning has been carried out to date and it was agreed that it was now too late in the season for it be effective. The only pruning to be carried out pre harvest will be for machine access. Stuart stated that the good extension growth was a good indication that next year's crop should be good so the benefits of a secondary prune may be minimal anyway. Time will tell!

Nelson Field Day Attendees



Canterbury Focus Grove Field Day

Held at Terrace Edge Olive Grove, Waipara 10th March 2017

Andrew Taylor and Stuart Tustin were welcomed to the grove and met with a broad cross-section of local olive producers. Attendees included Jill and Bruce Chapman - Focus Grove owners, Chris Smith from The Grove Supply Co and 18 growers. There were a number of apologies received also. The report has been prepared by the Focus Grover owner with additional comments from the Canterbury Olives NZ secretary.

The project consultants felt the pruning technique had improved but that still needed to be more aggressive with some trees to encourage rejuvenation. They noted that the canopy health has improved. With the wet spring we have had, it was felt that we needed to compensate with more than three weekly spraying.

Stuart and Andrew observed significant dieback on some fruiting shoots from Anthracnose, which will require more spraying around flowering later in the year.

Some scale was observed and this will need two sprays with Mortar in December to eradicate this.

The crop load looks well balanced with the canopy.

From the Branch Secretary

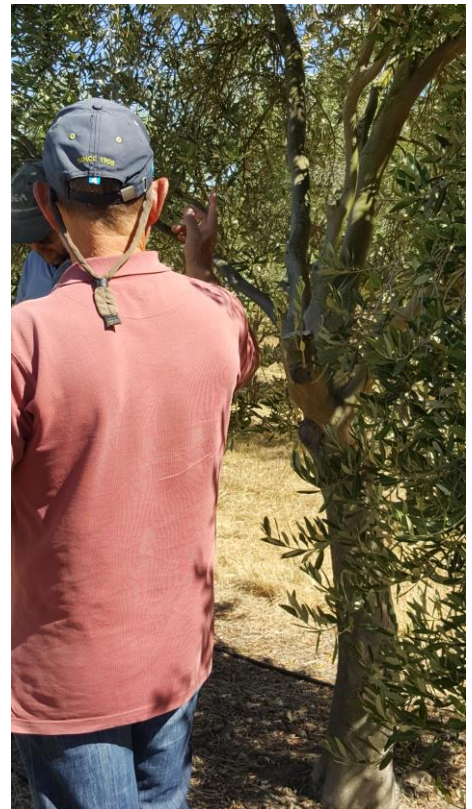
There was a lot of interest in what is being promoted under the project and local growers have reported they are implementing the recommended pruning regime and spray programme. There is seen to be definite improvement in the groves that are doing that. The olives look good and crop moderate to good in most groves.

There should be good quantity through the processor this year and the problem with the press last year has helped bring people together, even the ones that are not shareholders.

Canterbury Field Day Attendees



Showing how pruning has enable dappled light



New growth on coppiced tree

Hawke's Bay Focus Grove Field Day

Held at Aquiferria Olive Grove, 17 March 2017

Seventeen people, in addition to Stuart Tustin, Andrew Taylor, Shona Thompson and Bob Marshall attended the Field Day. Two were from Northland (Linda and Chris Smith, representing The Grove Supply Co.) and two from the Wairarapa. This report has been prepared by the Focus Grove owner.

The group started on the western edge of the grove, looking at the Koroneiki and moved east across the grove looking at the other three main varieties (Frantoio, Leccino and Picual). Both Stuart and Andrew commented that there was a good fruit set, although not as large as last year. Andrew noted some flower stems which were barren, potentially as a result of an anthracnose infection during flowering. It was suggested that a Manzate spray or two during flowering might be useful to consider to prevent the problem in future.

It appeared that the fruit on the trees which had been previously pruned heavily had slightly larger fruit than the trees which had been pruned more conservatively, although the owners agreed to do both fruit weight and dry matter calculations at harvest to determine if there were differences.

There were no apparent problems from the lack of water for two months as a result of the irrigation well drying up, although disease spread resulting from two missed sprays would not be seen until next year.

Overall both Stuart and Andrew were happy with the tree health and fruit set in the grove.

The group retired to the house for refreshments and conversation at the conclusion of the grove discussion.

Hawke's Bay Field Day Attendees



Wairarapa Focus Grove Field Day

Held at Leafyridge Olives - Friday, 24 March 2017

In attendance were Stuart Tustin and Andrew Taylor and 42 attendees from the district as well as some from other regions. This report has been prepared by the Focus Grove owner. We welcomed Andrew Taylor and Stuart Tustin to the grove and began the proceedings by gathering around some of the trees that were pruned at the last Field Day to observe progress.

Pruning had opened up the canopy and encouraged fairly vigorous new growth around the cut area. Stuart also pointed out marks on the trunk which look like acne but are in fact the beginnings of new growth shoots.

Andrew noted that there was good evidence of 3 year old leaves on new shoots and challenged growers to examine their trees to see if they had this as well.

It is believed that this is as a result of the rigorous spraying regime adopted to ensure that new shoots are constantly protected from disease.

New growth should be left alone for the first 2 years before thinning out.

Although there were a few signs of anthracnose, generally the trees had good canopy with healthy leaves.

Some instances of scale had been found and Stuart explained that the scale could be introduced from the nursery but lie dormant or undetected for up to six or seven years and then become evident.

A spray of Mortar with a penetrant, usually fixed the problem but it was nevertheless important to check periodically for infestation.

The drought last year had had an effect on some trees ability to fruit this year but on most trees there was good development beyond the fruit which bodes well for next year.

Also noted was that fruit tended to be in clusters, rather than singly which shows good fruit set after pollination.

We have had good rainfall this season and the bigger sized fruit is evidence of this.

Crop load of Frantoio is reasonable on all trees with Leccino particularly good again this year.

Wairarapa Field Day Attendees



Discussing New Growth



New Growth

Northland Field Day

Held at Olives on the Hill, Mangawahi – Thursday 30 March, 2017.

To enable dissemination of information and participation by olive growers in Auckland, Northland and Waiheke Island, field days are held at Olives on the Hill, Mangawahi. . There were 16, plus Andrew Taylor, Stuart Tustin, Chris and Linda Smith (owners of Olives on the Hill), so 20 in all. This report has been prepared by Linda Smith.

After a brief introduction to the Focus Grove Project for the newer members of Olives NZ, most of the discussion centred around spraying programmes and the pros and cons of spraying vs working towards becoming a certified organic olive grower, plus a comparison of the different sprays that are available today. For the benefit of new members who had not attended earlier focus grove field days, there were also discussions around the height and spacing of the trees in the grove, and the pruning regimes undertaken to improve the health, harvestability and ultimately the productivity of the trees.

The trees that had been pruned in the October visit were showing good re-growth, and the trees were looking healthy and vigorous. Two year old growth from the pruning cuts was healthy and green, with little leaf die back and very little disease evident. The coppiced Leccino trees are looking healthy and will be ready for a prune by September. Some yellowing of leaves was evident in the centre of the new growth of these coppiced trees, but this was age and lack of light, not disease.