



## **SFF Project 404831 Interim Project Status Report**

### **Increasing the Market Share for New Zealand Olive Oil**

#### **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 interim project status report outlines the progress made by the Focus Groves on following the recommendations from the Focus Grove visits. 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.

The reports have been completed by the Focus Grove participants and also detail any issues encountered in following the recommendations.



## Focus Grove Reports

### Aquiferra – Hawke's Bay

We have continued with our standard spraying regime at Aquiferra - Stuart and Andrew did not recommend any changes there. Stuart's recommended pruning was carried out on the 3 rows of trees (1 each of Frantoio, Leccino, Picual) which entailed less work than we would normally have done.

We had a reasonable fruit set, but not as large as last year.

Our well ran dry between Christmas and New Years and so the trees have not been irrigated since then. As of yesterday we have had 23 mm of rain since December 20th. We have a few yellow leaves (more on the 'Stuart pruned' trees as they have more foliage) and the fruit does not seem to have increased in size since early January. The trees are not dropping fruit at this stage.

### Kakariki – Nelson

There have been no hidden surprises as a result of the Focus Grove Project now being under way properly. Stewart's and Andrew's recommendation have been pretty much the mantra that we have followed from the outset of the project.

We have struggled this year to keep up with the pruning programme as efficiently as we would have liked because of our work load with still developing our processing press infrastructure. We will be doing a lot more secondary pruning than normal before harvest in an attempt to get back on track with our restructuring pruning. Part of the problem is not wanting to compromise our market share by going too hard out on the pruning and losing too much crop while at the same time not reintroducing any biennial bearing tendencies. The March field day will be important to us in refining our strategy for the balance of this season.

We have invested in a higher spec blast sprayer to help overcome the problems of coverage on our big trees which has taken some of the pressure off us to reduce our tree size too quickly. This has been the biggest expense that may not have occurred if we were not part of the focus grove project. All other costs are as expected. The donation of 4 bags of Mancozeb was much appreciated.



### Terrace Edge – Canterbury

We increased our spray schedule but it was extremely wet up until December and we still have peacock spot- may need to do more next year if again wet. Pruning is a work in progress. We also did a huge development on our cellar door which went into the end of November which put me behind on pruning. No other projects this year so will be better prepared.

The crop is looks okay but not quite as good as last year.

Time was the limiting factor!

### Leafyridge – Wairarapa

Since the last Focus Grove day, I have stepped up my spraying of Manzate to every 3 weeks as opposed to every 4 weeks.

I must say that I do not see much in the way of disease on the leaves although there is a greater incidence of yellow leaves on some manzanillo and Leccino trees this season.

I suspect however, that this has more to do with the lack of water - most likely a carry-over from the severe drought we experienced last year.

I began irrigating in December 2016 at about 25L/tree/day. We have had minimal rain since December and it has been hot and windy.

Fruit set is reasonable across varieties but better on Leccino than Frantoio this year. I have noticed that the small olives have set in bunches rather than individually which I see as a sign of good pollination.

I have continued with the pruning recommended by Stuart and Andrew, especially on the older (15yrs) Frantoio and Leccino. I am taking the approach of one really major branch removed as low down as possible to stimulate new growth and open up the canopy.

I am also trying to ensure that in doing this I also improve the spray penetration.

Previously pruned trees are showing good new growth.