

ONZ AGM 23 March 2019

President's Annual Report

Membership

For the first time in many years membership numbers exceeded 200, 210 compared to 189 in 2017

Harvest

The 2018 harvest year was probably 'average' for most groves. The Focus Groves however reported an excellent harvest.

Certification

Olives New Zealand continued to work with the Oil Testing Service operated by the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries for the Certification programme. The Oil Testing Service has advised that their Sensory Panel has not been accredited by the OC for 2019 although the laboratory has. The Executive considered the implications of this and explored options for having oil certified by IOC accredited panels in USA but the costs and logistics were impractical. There is no requirement that the panel be IOC accredited, it is just desirable, so we are satisfied that continuing to use the current service meets our needs.

Promotion of the OliveMark as the consumer's guarantee of authenticity and freshness continues to be a key focus for Olives New Zealand

New Zealand Extra Virgin Olive Awards

The 2018 Head Judge was Esteban Santipolio from Argentina.

A good entry of 115 was received; 99 EVOO & 16 Flavoured. Loopline Olives from Wairarapa took out the 2018 Best in Show as well as Reserve Best in Show. Juno Olives, also from Wairarapa, took out Best Boutique and Reserve Best Boutique in Show. The Awards Dinner was held at the Copthorne Solway Park in Masterton with a good attendance of 90 members and guests.

Conference

Conference was held at the Copthorne Solway Park, Masterton with 71 attendees, most who also attended the Field Day the previous day and BBQ dinner that evening. Keynote presenters at Conference were Dr Stuart Tustin from Plant and Food Research (Focus Grove Project Overview and Update), Esteban Santipolio (Olive Growing in Argentina) and Pablo Canamasas (Factors affecting longevity of EVOO) and our own Dr Bob Marshall and Gayle Sheridan (2018 Consumer Survey and Marketing Recommendations).

Grove Census

The Grove Census database was updated at the end of the year to include 2018 harvest tonnage and yields. The majority of Olives New Zealand members contributed to the Grove Census Update and after seven years, data comparisons are extremely useful for members and the industry.

There is now a total of 279, 539 trees recorded in the database

Focus Grove Project

The Focus Grove Project, aimed at identifying best practices to increase grove production and the market share for NZ EVOO, is nearing completion. This project is jointly funded by the Sustainable Farming Fund and members of Olives New Zealand plus with substantial contribution by the Focus Grove participants. The project runs from July 2016 until October 2018 with a final visit to groves in March 2019..

The pilot groves were all visited twice during the year by the Plant and Food Research tree specialist and the project consultant in March and in October/November. The visits coincided with a regional mini field day. More than 100 growers attended the five field days (Northland is added to the 4 Focus Groves), plus there were sponsors and other

guests from various stakeholder groups. The Focus Groves continue to demonstrate real improvements in their tree health and harvest tonnage by adopting the recommended strategies.

Unfortunately Olives New Zealand's application to the Sustainable Farming Fund, to build on the results of the current project, was unsuccessful.

This was particularly disappointing given the momentum we have gained and our desire to progress with the next phase viz. sustainability and tree nutrition.

We do have some ideas for other options and will pursue these in the coming months.

We are also keen to begin looking at other possible ways of improving tree health and productivity in conjunction with the Focus Grove methods. What we have tried to achieve is to find a demonstrable way of doing this but accept that there may be other ways as well. Now that we have one, it is time to try others!

Marketing

The main marketing initiative in 2018 was the commissioning of independent consumer surveys with general consumers, chefs and food writers. There was very meaningful data collected with these surveys. As a follow-on from the surveys, Olives NZ also commissioned an independent review of the full research results; the findings and recommendations on a growth strategy for NZ EVOO and how this could be achieved. The summary of this review was presented at Conference along with the survey results.

A sub group of regional reps was formed to progress these ideas but in the end decided that the time was not right at the moment and to put this on hold for now.

Food Safety Act

2018 was the year that virtually all olive growers and processors were required to register under the new Food Safety Act for a National Programme. Olives New Zealand successfully worked to gain an exemption for National Programme Three for growers who package their own EVOO (subject to set criteria) which means that the majority of members register under National Programme One with a one-off verification visit unless any issues arise.

Olives NZ has three National Programme templates developed for sale to members, which simplifies the process and have been well received by Councils and MPI.

While more than 60 templates have been sold and some members have worked independently, this still leaves a lot of members yet to meet the new requirements

Visit by International Olive Council

Olives NZ hosted a visit by Jaime Lillo, Deputy Director General of the International Olive Council, and Ender Gunduz, Head of Promotion Unit, on Thursday 31 May and Friday 1 June. The visit went very well with our IOC visitors very impressed with that state of the New Zealand industry and the groves and other olive businesses they visited. The formal meetings with MPI and then MFAT and MPI went well and these Government Ministries were interested to learn about the NZ olive industry and the role of the IOC.

Olives NZ has traditionally aligned with the IOC in relation to having had an IOC accredited Panel, our Certification system, Awards judging process and use of IOC trained Judges. At the invitation of the IOC, Olives NZ requested that New Zealand be given formal "observer" status. That means that NZ representatives can attend meetings, receive communications, attend conferences, etc. and there is no cost associated with this. This request was approved and the IOC is also interested for New Zealand to become Full Members.

Future Direction

The priorities for Olives New Zealand continue to be improving the productivity of olive groves in New Zealand, promoting NZ EVOO and the OliveMark and raising awareness about the importance of good processing practices.

Executive Members

Thank you to the Executive officer and all members for their valuable time and input during the year. Special thanks to Bob Marshall who is stepping down as HB chair and therefore leaves the exec after many years. Welcome to Geoff Crawford who takes his place.