

Olives New Zealand
Executive Meeting Minutes Synopsis
Thursday 16th April 2020
Teleconference 7pm – 8pm

1. Present

Craig Leaf-Wright (President), Tricia Noble-Beasley (Vice President), Charles Chinnaiyah (Treasurer), Geoff Crawford, Andrew Priddle, Ray Gregory, Niall Holland, Gayle Sheridan

2. Financial

Charles spoke to the Financial Statements that had been circulated. He noted the Budget Variance Report showed income was under budget for Membership Fees, OliveMark Promotion (merchandise sales), Processor Course (cancelled) and Sponsorship.

It was noted that the Audit Fee was \$900 under budget and Charles said this was because there were no queries from the Auditor so was a straight forward process.

3. Executive Officer Report

Gayle spoke to her report which had been circulated.

Gayle said her workload had been exacerbated as there had been a lot of enquiries about COVID-19 from members and non-members. Similarly a lot of enquiries from members and non-members who were not National Programme registered but had been selling olives/oil or harvesting from non registered groves.

Membership

Eleven memberships had been terminated because of non-payment, although one had since paid. This made a total of 32 resignations/terminations but there have been 8 new members, taking total financial membership to 178.

Focus Grove Project

The Field Days had all been completed with very good turnouts apart from Wairarapa which had to be cancelled because of COVID-19. Gayle said that Craig and Chris Penman had provided excellent updates and photos for the report. The report was available on the website and been approved by MPI, along with the milestone invoice for payment. There had been good feedback from members on the March Report.

The Olive Grower & Processor magazine had a good article on the Organic Approach and had given approval for that article to be made available via the Olive NZ website.

Marketing

Gayle has been posting recipes to the Facebook page as well as the COVID-19 Fact Sheet. The latter had drawn comments from people who were not National Programme registered.

2020 AGM

With the AGM having been postponed because of COVID-19 the two options were to either reschedule as a face to face meeting once restrictions are lifted or to have a teleconference meeting. It was agreed to investigate the use of Zoom and reschedule the AGM accordingly and that a Sunday evening would be the best timing.

2020 Processing Practices and Judging EVOO Seminars

Both courses had been cancelled, fees refunded and flights for Gayle and the four Nelson judges held by Air NZ to credit against future flights. Hopefully for the Awards judging in September.

COVID-19

A Fact Sheet on the implications of COVID-19 on harvesting and processing had been issued to all members as well as being available on Facebook and the website. Under Level 4 there are implications for smaller groves who only harvest for personal use. Only growers who supply olives and/or oil for retail/wholesale are permitted to harvest. That situation may change under subsequent Alert Levels.

Certification 2020

It was noted that the Oil Testing Service would not be offering organoleptic assessment until at least 1 June. This should be fine for the 2020 Certification Programme. Modern Olives was continuing to offer full chemical and organoleptic assessment and their cost was similar. Two 2019 samples had been received for Certification and had been sent to Modern Olives.

National Programme Responsibility

Because COVID-19 Alert Level Four would limit harvesting/processing to only those supplying retail/wholesale this required a minimum of National Programme Level One. It has transpired that a number of people (members and non-members) have been selling olives/oil and do not hold the required National Programme registration. Others have been harvesting groves which are not registered and which should have been specified under their National Programmes. Fortunately most Councils have allowed late registration to rectify the situation.

2020 Awards

It is most unlikely that we will be able to have the two judges from Greece because of international travel restrictions. Probably we will be able to have judges from Australia plus our New Zealand judges to make up the judging panel. If there is no Head Judge excursion that would save \$3,000 which could be passed on to entrants. It was agreed to defer further discussion until the next meeting when travel restrictions might be better known.

Craig thanked Gayle for her report. He commented that the Focus Grove Report was very comprehensive and enabled members to better appreciate regional differences. The report was an incredibly useful tool for members and can be seen actually as a handbook.

4. 2020 Executive Priorities

Covered off in previous discussions.

5. General Business

Branch Updates

Wairarapa – Andrew noted that all 8 cases of COVID-19 in Wairarapa were now recovered. He said it was a shame the Field Day was cancelled as members found these really worthwhile.

Members in Wairarapa and Kapiti were looking forward to the commissioning of a new press. The fruit size across the region was looking smaller than usual but recent good rain may have improved this a little.

On Waiheke Island, where he was now harvesting, Andrew said the fruit was also small but the yield was good. He noted the fruit was over-ripe despite being harvested earlier than usual.

Andrew said that on some groves in Wairarapa some varieties have a lower crop load, especially those that had a good crop in 2019.

The Branch committee is compiling a spreadsheet register of surplus fruit from growers who do not require all of their crop so that details can be passed on to others wanting more fruit.

Kapiti – Tricia said that Waikanae groves are looking to harvest in early May but Te Horo will be start around 5 June. There is a variable crop load across the wider Kapiti region including a poor crop for the third year in a row for a grove following the Focus Grove programme. There is an issue with immature fruit and also with biennial bearing. Unfortunately the cancelled Field Day was a lost opportunity for Kapiti members to catch up.

Canterbury - Niall said there had been very positive feedback from the Focus Grove Field Day and access to expert knowledge was much appreciated. Crops on the peninsula are looking good but patchy elsewhere across Canterbury. Those following the Focus Grove programme were looking ok but generally will be a low crop year for Canterbury.

Nelson – Ray said the Branch committee had met in March and people were generally happy with their crops. They were getting ready for harvest which looked like starting the last week in May or first week in June. People were also looking forward to a post-harvest get together. There had been very good feedback from the Field Day.

Craig took the opportunity to formally welcome Ray to the Executive.

Hawke's Bay – Geoff said they had made a start on harvesting table olives, which was 7-10 days earlier than usual.

Drought conditions continued and the rain that other regions had benefitted from had been a non-event in Hawke's Bay. The lack of rain has impacted on fruit size. The oil olive harvest would probably start the first week in May. Fruit set had been good at groves following the Focus Grove programme with a good crop load spread across individual trees and across the groves. At the Focus Grove Field Day Bob had said the harvest was looking pretty similar to previous years that is 25-35kg per tree.

Craig asked how many other groves were following the Focus Grove programme and Geoff said that a few are now adopting the recommendations and getting good results. However this was not the situation with other groves and unhealthy trees were evidenced in harvesting with lots of leaf loss and diseased fruit.

Gayle commented on the impact of no Farmers Markets and the loss of restaurant trade. She asked if anyone had ideas on how Olives NZ could help in the promotion of NZ EVOO for members. She and Geoff had discussed this but had not come up with anything. Gayle would promote in the newsletter the need for people to be listed under the Where to Buy tab of the website.

Niall said that with grove income predicted to be down this year it would be good if Olives NZ could keep costs down for members, for example with the Awards and Certification.

There being no further business Craig thanked everyone for their participation and declared the meeting closed at 8.00pm.