

Olives New Zealand

AGM 21 March 2020

President's Annual Report

Membership

Membership numbers again were just over 200 although a few lower than last year; 202 compared to 210 in 2019

Harvest

The past year's harvest which is probably a distant memory for many of us as this year's harvest looms, was below average for many groves. In fact one of the largest groves in the country did not harvest at all as it would have been uneconomical. 69% of the groves that did harvest reported an average of under 10kg per tree. Kapiti had a good season averaging over 15kg per tree followed by the Wairarapa with just below 15kg/tree. The Focus Groves however, were well above these figures with several blocks exceeding 25kg/tree which is very encouraging.

Certification

179 oils were submitted for certification last year representing about 126,000 litres (the prior year was 200,000 litres so quite a lot lower).

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

Head judge for the annual awards was Dr Agusti Romero from Spain.

125 entries were received; 108 for EVOO and 17 for flavoured oils.

Best in Show was won by Kapiti Olives with their Picual blend. Reserve Best in Show went to Olea Estate from the Wairarapa with their Picual.

Best in Boutique (growers producing under 250 litres) was won by Old French Road from Canterbury with their Picholene. Reserve Best Boutique went to Avenir Trust from Waiheke Island with their Woodside Bay olive oil.

Best flavoured oil was won by The Olive Press from Wairarapa with their Pressed Gold Kaffir lime agrumato.

The Best Processor was also won by The Olive Press.

Medals won were 24 Gold, 76 Silver and 21 Bronze – total of 121.

The awards dinner was held at the Bolton Hotel in Wellington with a good attendance of over 70 members and guests. MP Greg O'Connor was our guest speaker.

Conference

We did not have a Conference last year.

Grove Census

We now have a total of 306,000 trees recorded in our database. Hawkes Bay region has the largest number of trees (60,000), then Auckland and Northland with 50,000 each and Wairarapa (43,000).

The oil yield % was up across all regions and the national average went from 12.3% to 14.7%.

Focus Grove Project

The Focus Grove Project phase 1, aimed at identifying best practices to increase grove production and the market share for NZ EVOO, was successfully completed during the year.

The best practice methods developed for canopy and disease management were so successful that the target to increase production to an average 15kg/tree was exceeded with several of the Focus Groves and others following the methodologies achieving 25kg/tree or better. Better still, we are beginning to see some growers achieving this year on year.

There has been some really good media coverage of what we are doing, the latest being a short program on TVNZ Rural Delivery.

Following on the success of Phase 1 we were able to secure further funding to continue the project under the Sustainable Food and Fibres Futures from MPI. The main aim is to again increase production by an average of 5kg/tree but also to introduce another element; that of an alternate and more organic approach rather than relying on the current spray program. The new project got underway in October 2019 and there have been 2 visits to the Focus Groves involved (other than the March one to the Wairarapa which had to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 restrictions).

Marketing

We have been very appreciative of the media articles profiling growers and the New Zealand Olive industry.

Food Safety Act

Most members will have had their verification visits for NP1 or NP3 during the past year. Whilst we do not appear to have had any major issues arise, one concern which has been reported by some members is the variability in audit approach by different verifiers.

International recognition

Although it falls after the end of the reporting year, I would like to recognize the achievement of those members who recently won Gold at the New York International Olive Oil Competition:

Kakariki Mediterranean Blend

Kapiti Picual Blend

Loopline olives Picual

Loopline olives Picholene

Olea Estate Picual

Old French Road Picholene

Woodside Bay.

Also noted that Dali was just recently announced in the Best 25 Luxury Olive Oils of the World.

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

A big thank you to the Executive officer, Gayle Sheridan, and all members for their valuable time and input during the year. Special thanks to John Dunlop from Nelson who stepped down as their chair and therefore left the exec after many years. Welcome to Ray Gregory who has taken his place.

Craig Leaf-Wright

President

24 May 2020