

Olives New Zealand

AGM 21 March 2021

President's Annual Report

Membership

Membership numbers this year dropped to 185 compared with 200 last year. This was for a number of reasons; groves sold, ceasing commercial operations and some due to the increase in membership fees.

Covid-19

Unfortunately, the Level 4 lockdown began just as many groves were about to harvest. Since olive harvesting/processing was classified an essential service, most were able to be completed albeit under strict protocols. ONZ produced a number of Fact Sheets to assist with this. Sadly the closure of markets and restaurant activities resulted in lost sales for many members.

Harvest

The season's harvest was disappointing for the majority of groves despite a promising flowering. This just did not translate into a good fruit set and combined with drought conditions across most of the country, the total harvest was down approximately 25% on the previous year. Those groves following the Focus Grove recommendations fared markedly better, however. About 20% of groves reported no harvest and 69% reported less than 10kg per tree on average. This is what we need to improve!

Certification

We continued to work with NSW DPI in Australia for our Certification program and are very pleased with the results. All oils submitted for certification were classified as Extra Virgin Olive Oil. Interestingly, the majority of oils were deemed to be intense.

New Zealand Extra Virgin Olive Awards

This year we had the second highest number of entries on record. Because of Covid-19 restrictions we were forced to implement remote judging which required some changes to procedures and a little ingenuity. In the end, it worked most satisfactorily and judges even commented that they had more time to work through entries and avoided palate fatigue. Results were excellent with 38% Gold medals awarded (20% Gold last year). The Wairarapa, which has the most growers of all regions, won 45% of all medals plus 4 of the 5 major awards.

Conference

The Conference was held at the Airport Rydges Hotel in Wellington and attended by 55 members. Presenters covered a number of interesting topics and were well received.

Grove Census

We currently have 305,510 trees recorded in our database. Hawke's Bay has the largest number (64,000) followed by Auckland and Northland (50,000 each) and then Wairarapa (45,000). Oil yields across all regions was similar to 2019 with a national average of 14.7%.

Focus Grove Project

The Sustainable Food and Fibres Futures Project (of Focus Grove Project Phase 2) entered its second year. The main aim is to further increase average production per tree by another 5kg every year. The second aim is to introduce an alternate more organic approach to maintaining trees. Visits to the Focus Groves via Field Days were in March and October. At the Field Days the key aspects addressed and discussed are Nutritional advice, disease management, pruning techniques and harvesting.

Marketing

ONZ took advantage of the opportunities to promote NZ EVOO following the success of our members at the New York International Olive Oil Competition where New Zealand won seven Gold medals. We also involved local media in covering the New Zealand Extra Virgin Olive Oil Awards in October, focussing on Buy Local and the OliveMark.

Food Safety Act

Most members are now registered under NP1 or NP3 and some are even beginning preparation for renewal of their certification.

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 our Executive officer, Gayle Sheridan, and all members of the executive committee for their valuable time and input during the year.

Craig Leaf-Wright

President

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