

Olives New Zealand
Executive Meeting Minutes Synopsis
Thursday 28th April 2022
ZOOM Conference Meeting
7pm – 8.13pm

1. Present

Craig Leaf-Wright (President), Ray Gregory, Alan Blakemore, Gayle Sheridan

2. Apologies

Tricia Noble-Beasley, Charles Chinnaiyah, Geoff Crawford, Andrew Priddle

3. Minutes of the February Meeting

Matters arising

Project Proposals

Alan said most feedback from Canterbury supported the Online Market as well as the Hawke's Bay and David Walshaw's proposals. There was a wish to continue with the Field Days on at least an annual basis but the market place for bulk oil was the most favoured.

Gayle said she had facilitated meetings with Gordon Legge and Seth Zorn who ran a digital company. Based on further information from Gordon that the Stage One – Market Place would be an enhanced version of the current classified oil marketplace on the website and able to be maintained by members. This would be linked to the current website and Seth has estimated this would cost \$3-3,500 plus GST. Gordon's proposal has been updated to include this costing.

Stage Two would be to develop a generic brand pooling surplus oil and able to approach/supply supermarkets. Perhaps the Consumer NZ review provides an opportunity to offer supermarkets a truly NZ product.

Alan said he had also received a suggestion on the judges' succession planning of using more Australian judges or asking AOA to add a section for NZ EVOO and sending the oils to them. Gayle said her report suggested that using more international judges was an option but there was a need to ensure acclimatising their palates to the NZ oils. This was probably the most viable option.

Ray said the feedback from Nelson members was for more market development including promotion of NZ EVOO and the OliveMark. Alan commented that he thought there has been no promotion of the OliveMark in Canterbury and it was not understood by the consumer. Craig said actually there has been ongoing promotion of the OliveMark at every opportunity.

Ray asked if it was time to review the Awards rule that precluded judges from entering. He said there was at least one of the current judges and potentially new judges affected by this. He did not support the suggestion of sending our oils offshore for judging.

Craig recapped the history where Olives NZ did allow judges to enter but there was a rule that they not participate in judging of their own oil. Unfortunately that rule was broken. There was tremendous adverse publicity about this and almost caused the organisation to implode.

Gayle said with the use of an independent Facilitator and two judging panels, perhaps this could be reviewed. However there were still growers around who had resigned their membership in protest and who still referred to this 'scandal' as why they would not re-join.

Tricia had said feedback from Kapiti members was for more Focus Grove type activities, that is the Hawke's Bay proposal. There was a noted lack of support for the rebranding and sustainable growing standards proposals.

Geoff had said feedback from Hawke's Bay was strongly in support of their proposal and there was no support for rebranding or the sustainable growing standard.

4. Financial

Gayle spoke to the April Financial Reports which had been circulated. There was nothing untoward in the reports but she noted that Membership was under-budget and should be picked up with new members during the year.

Craig said that overall the budget was on track with minimal variance.

5. Executive Officer Report

Gayle spoke to her report circulated.

Financial Systems

Eight members had been terminated because of not paying their 2022 membership and updated Branch lists have been sent to all Chairs. Mainly these were smaller or non-active growers.

Membership

Is similar to last year at this time, so resignations and terminations have been balanced by new members.

AGM

The Zoom meeting had seen an excellent participation of 42. Craig said this was definitely the forum for such meetings to enable participation of members from across the country.

Focus Grove Project

There had been good attendances at all Field Days and a number of members had also attended outside of their own regions. There was general support that Field Days should continue after this project finishes.

The Milestone Report was on the website and the link emailed to all members.

MPI had accepted the report and paid the milestone invoice. Our Advisor had commented positively about the new project proposals and suggested that Olives NZ should apply for (co) funding for any eligible under the Sustainable Food & Fibres Future fund.

There had been positive feedback from Northland members about the engagement with Oliveti.

Marketing

There had been a good article on the Focus Grove Project in the online Olive Oil Times plus there had been a radio interview on the 2022 harvest on Today FM. Rachel Smally from Today FM may do a follow-up in which case Gayle has suggested she talk with Craig as President and for a processor's perspective as well as being a commercial grove and able to comment on smaller groves to.

Waiting for more information from the High Value Nutrition Project on final volume of NZ EVOO required and how this should be packaged.

Courses

Waiting on costs and preferred date for the Judging EVOO and Flavoured Oils Seminar. The budget can then be drafted and the course promoted.

The Processing Practices Seminar will be held in Canterbury on 12 -13 September. Pablo has confirmed splitting the two days into half theory and half practical. The theory component will be at Terrace Edge and the practical across the road at the Waipara Olive Press. Waiting on costs from Pablo and the Waipara Olive Press so that the budget can be drafted and the course promoted.

Country of Origin

The exposure by Consumer NZ that some olive oils that appeared to be NZ but were imported oils provided an opportunity for Olives NZ. Whilst Olives NZ has been raising this with MPI for probably 10 years as one of the major issues facing the industry, MPI had chosen not to include olive oil in the new Country of Origin regulations. On the one hand MPI supported Olives NZ with co-funding for the Focus Grove Project but on the other hand worked against NZ EVOO and typically small/medium sized businesses with allowing major brands to not be required to declare Country of Origin. Gayle had sent a letter to Minister O'Connor expressing our disappointment at the situation.

NZ EVOO Awards - Judges Succession

It was apparent that there was a user-pays course available in Italy but there would need to be project management (funded by Olives NZ) in finding and screening interested people and then ongoing training and mentoring of these people in New Zealand until they were able to become qualified judges. The other option was to use more international judges to make up the two panels.

2022 Conference

Increasing Polyphenols - some suggestions of presenters being followed up.

Rejuvenating a Super Grove – Andrew Taylor is confirmed

Focus Grove Project – Stuart Tustin is confirmed

Converting to Organic – to confirm

High Value Nutrition Project – to confirm

6. 2022 Executive Priorities

Productivity – see Executive Officer Report

Processing – 2022 Course in September

Marketing – see Executive Officer Report

7. General Business

Best Practice Manual/ Focus Grove Project

Geoff has suggested that the Best Practice Manual be updated with the Focus Grove Fact Sheets. Discussion deferred until Geoff is in attendance.

Andrew Taylor – secondment to Executive

Following on from Andrew's attendance at the AGM, he had offered his availability as Immediate Past President to be seconded to the Executive to provide historic institutional knowledge. This offer was happily accepted.

Branch Updates

Canterbury

Alan said there had been concerns at an apparent light flowering however crop loads were now looking very promising. In particular Terrace Edge has its best ever crop and Banks Peninsula also looks to be record crops. South Canterbury was looking better than anticipated although some varieties were later than usual. Overall looking to be a good harvest.

Nelson

Ray said that crops were looking to be generally down reflecting poor or no flowering of some varieties. There is, as always, concern about frost but growers are all working towards harvest time, which would start late May.

Wairarapa

Craig said Martinborough was typically a week ahead of the rest of Wairarapa. Geoff had visited groves to check on Manzanilla for table olives and had said that Martinborough was almost ready to harvest, whereas the Masterton groves were about two weeks away. Craig said that people were excited with plump fruit but that could mean a high water content although if the fruit was heavier then it should shake off better. Harvest should be starting the second week in May and run through until the end of June. Craig said that Pressing Engagements would not operate this year which would pose a challenge for small groves. It may be that they need to amalgamate their olives with other growers for processing.

Succession Planning for Executive Officer Update

Craig said the position has been loaded to Seek and will run until the end of May.

Other Business

Alan said he had been asked to raise bird control which was looking to be an issue this year. He said they have bird scaring kites up early this year and also use an electronic squawker. As the season progresses they expect to see more birds, especially wax eyes.

Craig said their main problem was with starlings and they ran gas guns from about 9am to 3.30pm, going off every 15 minutes. He said it was crucial to get these going at the first sign of any birds as once the birds become established in the grove it is difficult to address. Craig said that as the season progresses it may be necessary to increase frequency. He also wanders around the grove with a shot gun to shoot birds so they get the message the bangs have repercussions. He also has an old noisy motorbike he rides around the grove and has recently bought a 'barking drone'. This will be programmed to fly around the grove.

Ray said they also use canons and shot a few.

Gayle said there is a good section on managing birds in the Best Practice Manual.

There being no further business Craig thanked all for their participation and declared the meeting closed at 8.13pm

New Members:

Jason and Natalie North, Central Otago
Neil Smith, Northland
Gavin Birrell, Wairarapa

Christine Ridding, Wairarapa
Lisa Prohuber & Rick Jones, Northland
Wendy and Wayne Ellery, Northland