

Olives New Zealand

AGM 20 March 2022

President's Annual Report

Membership

Membership numbers this year dropped slightly to 182 compared with 185 last year. We do however expect some new grove owners to join in the new financial year.

Covid-19

The disruption and challenges presented by Covid affected most, if not all, members. Many regular farmers markets as well as seasonal markets were unable to operate during the year which hampered efforts to sell their oils. The long lockdown affected our Auckland members particularly.

ONZ was unable to run any courses and was also unable to use international guest judges for the NZ EVOO Awards. We can only hope that this situation will improve in 2022.

Harvest

Happily the 2021 harvest was a good one for the majority of groves with tonnages generally up on last year. There were some frustrations around harvesting with commercial harvesters not being available just at the right time. This meant some fruit was harvested earlier than desired, or else having to wait and face the threat of birds or frosts.

Unfortunately 17% of groves reported no harvest which is a pity because it appears that the demand for fruit is greater than supply. For the first time since harvest data records have been produced, about half the groves that harvested, got more than an average 10kg per tree across the grove. This is very encouraging.

Certification

ONZ made the decision to move to Modern Olives in Australia for 2021 certification for a few reasons: the organoleptic panel of DPI (who we used previously) were not IOC accredited for 2021 whereas Modern Olives is; the turnaround for Modern Olives is much quicker (7 days vs 15) and Modern Olives only require 1 bottle of sample oil, not 2. There was a cost saving in doing this as well, which was passed back to members (\$230 vs \$250). In hindsight, the new arrangement worked very well and will be continued in 2022.

The quality of oils submitted continued to be excellent with 98% of oils being classed as Extra Virgin. Interestingly, the intensity of oils in 2021 was generally less than 2020 with most falling into the medium category as opposed to being roughly evenly split between medium and intense.

New Zealand Extra Virgin Olive Awards

This year we had the highest number of entries on record (165). Because of Covid-19 restrictions, we again used remote judging. Feedback from the judges was very positive in relation to the organisation and the fact that they had more time to judge at their own pace which minimised "palate fatigue". Results were again excellent with 81 Gold medals, 72 Silver and 9 Bronze medals awarded. The Wairarapa, which has the most growers of all regions, won 47% of all medals.

Grove Census

We now have 312,000 trees recorded in our database. Hawke's Bay has the largest number followed by Auckland, Northland and Wairarapa and there is now a more even spread across the regions.

There was quite a variation in crops harvested across regions from Hawkes Bay with 16.7kg/tree down to Central Otago with 3.8kg/tree. Central Otago suffered from frosts around harvest time that affected 2/3 of their crop. Nelson and the Wairarapa both had good crop averages of 12.5 and 12.1 kg/tree respectively.

Oil yields across all regions was similar to 2020 with a national average of 13.8 compared with 14.4%.

There were 3.7 tons of table olives produced in 2021, less than half of that produced in 2020. The largest production came from Wairarapa followed by Canterbury and Hawkes Bay.

41% of groves now have a spray program with the main objectives being to prevent Peacock Spot and Anthracnose. Manzate is the most widely used spray through the year, with Protek used to combat Anthracnose at flowering time. A number of groves are following organic principles with increasing success. The results of their efforts are being monitored with interest.

Focus Grove Project

The Sustainable Food and Fibres Futures Project (Focus Grove Project Phase 2) entered its third and final year. The main aim is to further increase average production per tree by another 5kg every year. To reiterate, 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 (where possible, subject to Covid restrictions). At the Field Days the key aspects addressed and discussed are Nutritional advice, disease management, pruning techniques and harvesting.

There are excellent reports on the Focus Grove Project available on the ONZ website so please do make use of them.

Marketing

ONZ took advantage of any opportunities to promote NZEVOO following the success of our members at the New York International Olive Oil Competition winning 5 Gold and 1 Silver medals. We also involved local media in covering the New Zealand Extra Virgin Olive Oil Awards in October. Facebook is also used to interact with the public and promote articles of interest around Extra Virgin Olive Oil, especially from New Zealand.

Food Safety Act

Most members are registered under NP1 or NP3 and many have been through the audit for renewal of their certification. The Section 33 exemption to allow members meeting certain criteria to package their oil under NP1 was renewed for a further three years.

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. The Focus Grove project has dominated our thinking for some years but is coming to an end in November 2022. This means there are opportunities to embark on new projects that are important to members and we have already been given some ideas via the Branches of what these might be. All suggestions are very welcome so please contact your Branch Chair or the Executive Officer if you have any thoughts on what we should look at next.

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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