

Olives New Zealand

AGM 18 March 2025

President's Annual Report

Membership

Membership numbers seem to be remaining steady for this current year, which is encouraging. ONZ is nothing without an executive officer and it is the membership fees that make this possible.

Below are a couple of extracts that I have merged from the survey that was completed mid-year. I think it reflects why we are all members.

“We joined ONZ to become a member of the olive growing community in NZ to learn, improve the quality and performance of our grove, understand the unique conditions for olive production in NZ and to promote NZ olive oil.”
“For ONZ to be successful and to be able to provide opportunities for members to learn, improve and promote the industry it needs input from its members and active participation – especially in branch activities”.

Harvest

This year's harvest is looking considerably better than 2023 and 2024 across central regions. In the lower North Island and Southern regions, the 2024 harvest was significantly down, mainly due to frosts and the poor weather in 2023 as the trees were still recovering from the big wet in 2023. Auckland, Northland and Nelson all had big crops last year (unfortunately some of Nelson was frosted before they harvest), due to the biannual tendency of olive trees they are looking to have lighter crops this year with many of those producers already trying to secure bulk oil for their 2025 season.

2024 Oil yields were up and demand for oil went through the roof for those people with oil. Most people I spoke to had no or very little oil left by Christmas. We should all be quite bullish about the demand and significant increase in the per litre price.

Certification

ONZ continued to use the Modern Olives Laboratory in Australia for 2024 certification.

The quality of oils submitted was fantastic with every oil submitted being classed as Extra Virgin. The intensity of oils in 2024 was more on par with traditional NZ EVOO. Polyphenol counts were well up in some groves. Total litres certified was 97k compared with 77k in 2023, this is well below where we need to be.

Awards Evening and Conference

Last year the awards evening and conference were held in Wellington, Attendance and entries were down on previous years. This being a reflection on the poor 2024 harvest. Consequently, ONZ was unable to break even. This current year there will be no conference, instead we are moving the awards to Masterton to try and make it cheaper for the membership. A full program of activities is planned for the Saturday before the awards evening and also, we want to hold a member's workshop to discuss the Strategic Plan that we are developing.

Courses

In 2024 we saw the return of Pablo Canamasas for his Processing Practices Course, held at Rata Olives in Marton. This course is fantastic and a must attend for growers and processors alike. Unfortunately, the uptake was disappointing with attendance numbers down to 19 people.

In September last year we were lucky enough to be able to hold an Olive Oil Tasting Workshop with Margaret Edwards, this was fully booked within hours of notifying our members. A second one was scheduled, but unfortunately due to Margaret declining health we were unable to hold the second one.

Productivity and Polyphenols Project

I must report that this has come to a standstill. With a change of Government, MPI have said that under the governments funding criteria focused on growing export capabilities and because similar projects had taken place on other Horticulture industries, the olive industry needs to take the information from their outcomes and learnings. The Executive have decided to focus on regional branches holding field days and developing an Industry Strategy and ONZ Strategic plan.

Regional branches

The branches continue to be active around the country but attendance at activities is generally disappointing.

Emma has developed a calendar that we want the branch chairs to implement. One of my main focuses is to generate more regional activity to involve the membership more in different facets of the industry. Setting up regional branches in the Auckland, Northland and Otago regions is a focus of the executive committee.

Please discuss with your local committee what is of interest to you because getting together and sharing knowledge and experiences is invaluable.

Busy start to 2025

WEBSITE - Design of new website underway. The website has three focuses: consumer education on NZ EVOO and OliveMark, NZ Olive Industry information and ONZ organisation information. There will be a new Member login area, with a better layout of information and search functionality. The website is due to be completed by the end of April.

- All members who certify their oils and sell to consumers will be able to have their own listing on the site. Emma will be looking for a basic business blurb, contact details, a logo and up to two good quality images.
- We are asking members if they have quality generic photos of groves, olives, oil, processing etc or recipes that they are happy to be used on the site, to please let Emma know.

Some might question spending money on a new website under ONZ current financial position, but it is of the view of the Executive that it essential to promote ONZ, NZ EVOO and the industry. The website needs to be the information and resource 'library' for our members.

OLIVE OIL SENSORY TASTING TRAINING PROGRAM – introduced as a pilot program. Participants have four opportunities during the year to taste, analysis and home in on their tasting skills. The course designed to boost participants sensory evaluation skills and provide ongoing training, support and calibration for tasters and judges. There are 10 people registered over and above the current pool of NZ EVOO judges.

PRESS OPERATORS PROCESSING SESSION – Bill Hey is holding this 2-day course just before many people start pressing at Kakariki Olives in Nelson on the 6th & 7th May. It is designed around providing a refresher to seasoned processors or a crash course for those new to processing. We apologise to those that will already be operating their presses by this time. Next year we envisage having Pablo Canamasas back late-March/early-April for his course.

Future Direction

A **Strategic Plan** is being drafted by the Executive; to have a base document we wish to hold a member's workshop on the weekend on the NZ EVOO Awards (11th October)

- Direction for the Industry
- Direction for ONZ
- New ONZ branches in growing membership regions
- Review of ONZ Activities

Summary

It's been a fascinating year for me learning the how Olives NZ functions and getting to know the rest of the people on the executive who freely give up their time. Also, thanks to Emma for her hard work organising last year's conference and awards.

A special thanks Geoff Crawford who has been on the committee for several years. For any member that has visited the Telegraph Hill factory in Hastings and viewed all the fantastic recipes that Geoff has created over the years will realise the Geoff's departure from the NZ olive industry is a huge loss. Geoff is currently taking a well-earned sabbatical away from olives.

Finally, I wake up at night sometimes thinking are we heading in the right direction, I keep seeing comments like lack of leadership, no industry goals, marketing and planning, export plan. I have to remind myself these are all lofty goals that require significant finances and input from members. To be able to achieve these goals the industry needs to significantly increase production, being happy to with regional averages of 5-10Kg of olives per tree is never going to achieve these goals. Unless you can **Average** between 15kg -20kg of fruit per tree your grove is probably uneconomic.

So, I say to you all get involved with ONZ and grow more olives.

ONZ is here to help you achieve that.

Steven Price

President

16 March 2025