



R&D Insights contains the latest levy-funded R&D project updates, research findings and related industry resources, which all happen under the Hort Innovation Olive Fund.

Hort Innovation partners with leading service providers to complete a range of R&D projects to ensure the long-term sustainability and profitability of the olive industry.

Enthusiastic response to ‘interesting and relevant’ 2019 Conference

Interesting and relevant: those two words pretty much sum up the feedback from this year’s National Olive Conference & Trade Exhibition, held in October in Albury, NSW.

Backing up rave reviews for the 2018 event Wagga, the organisers pulled together a broad-ranging program based around the topical theme of *Healthy Groves, Healthy Businesses*. It made for a thought-provoking – at times even challenging – three days, jam-packed with information and learning opportunities on a diverse range of topics. Importantly, the program breadth also ensured it was relevant to the equally diverse range of participants who make up the olive industry.

Diverse content

AOA Greg Seymour said feedback both during and after the event has been enthusiastic, with strong support for the wide variety of information on offer.

“Everyone I’ve spoken with or heard from had things which really grabbed them among the topics, which they now want to find out more about,” he said.

“And all said they found the program really interesting and relevant, and can’t wait to go next year. As an organiser, that’s really what you want to hear.

“We were trying to create a program that, no matter who you are and what level of production or involvement you’re at, provides information which helps you think about your operation, what you’re doing and the ways you’re doing it, and maybe find some better ways of doing it.

“Sometimes that’s from the presentations or field visits, and the biggest value of a single jam-packed annual event like this is the opportunity to hear lots of people talking about lots of things at the one time. But it doesn’t necessarily always come from the

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“We found the information at the conference so informative and helpful to us and our business, and it has made us even more pumped for the coming year. Thanks to everyone on your team.”

Imogen Bettio, Elisi Grove

program, it’s often from someone else who’s been there and done that, and you’re unlikely to be able to get that information any other way.

“Getting together to share information and skills has a multitude of benefits beyond the obvious learning opportunities, and the chance to meet new industry members and catch up with old acquaintances is undoubtedly one of the most important.”



The social program was a popular element of the event, providing an opportunity to network over great regional food and wine.

New information

Peninsula Providore's Mel Hollick is a relative newcomer to the industry and has attended two previous industry conferences since purchasing the family's grove. She said the focus on new information was a major drawcard this year, and the event didn't disappoint.

"It was really well run and it was good that it wasn't the same topics. Every time there's still more to learn and there was so much new stuff, which was fabulous," she said.

"The visit to the National Environment Centre was absolutely wonderful and the focus on soil carbon was really good timing – everyone really loved that.

"I also really loved the insights into the macadamia industry and I think we should all be working together so we have that information at hand for the success of the industry. It's really important to be able to benchmark yourself, particularly as someone new to the industry.

Social networking

"The social side of it was really well done too. You could tell a lot of thought and effort had been put into the venues, menus and the entertainment, and people had a great time. They were really good opportunities for networking and I found that a huge benefit."

Those weren't the top things on



Lauren Hamilton provided invaluable hands-on guidance on Digital Marketing for Small Business at her Saturday workshop.

Got a suggestion for 2020?

The annual National Olive Conference & Trade Exhibition is your event and the organisers are keen to ensure the program topics and activities for the 2020 event meet the needs, wants and interests of all attendees.

So if there's something you'd like to know more about, a topic you'd like explored further – or even a relevant speaker you'd love to hear – please let them know, so they can add it to the discussion mix.

Send your ideas to AOA Admin Manager Liz Bouzoudis at secretariat@australianolives.com.au.

Hollick's list of highlights, however.

"The number one thing was the insight into table olive making from Linda Costa's workshop on the Saturday. That was massive," she said.

"And people who missed out on the grove tour at Gooramadda missed out on a huge opportunity. Walking around with Robert Spooner-Hart and Mike Thomsett, I got so much out of that, and I've come home knowing so much more about my own grove – including that I've got some issues to deal with.

"That opportunity to speak one-on-one in the grove and pick their brains was invaluable."

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"Congratulations on an outstanding conference and awards night! The organisation, choice and participation of speakers, engagement of delegates, stands, the field trip to the environmental centre and of course the quality of produce and the awards booklet (exceptional!) were brilliant. Well done on all counts!

"You provide such value to industry and it was very clear from speaking to delegates how much they appreciate your hard work." – Brenda Kranz, R&D Manager, Hort Innovation

Fun, friends ...

In contrast, Parafield Olives owner Margie Carter is one of the 'first wave' of Australian olive growers has been attending industry conferences on and off since 1996.

She said the early events were "so much fun" and described this year's Albury gathering as "like the good old days".

"It was friendlier – so was Wagga last year. It's come back to being friends and networking and finding stuff out from each other," she said.

"It's really good to get together with other people and just talk to each other. You can ask questions and see how you're travelling, and you go home revitalised and with some good new ideas.

"It's good just to socialise sometimes and make new friends in the industry. You can run into people year after year and not really know them, and the social events give you the chance to really meet people properly. You can also go to the Conference Dinner and find out that Professor Robert Spooner-Hart sings!"

... and 'finding stuff out'

Carter also found plenty to like among the plenary sessions.

"The talks were really good," she said.

"Alternative business models was really good and the digital marketing woman was excellent, I wanted more of her. That sort of practical stuff for small business owners is really valuable.

"We could have done with more of that young fellow on soil carbon too. He didn't even scratch the surface of the information around that and how we can put back, so another three hours with him would have been good.

"Everyone loved the Environment Centre visit too – the guy just makes so much sense. There were lots of questions and people really got a lot from it. He sent quite a few people off thinking differently about how they might run their groves – thinking about lots of things, actually."



The Gooramadda Olives grove tour provides an opportunity for delegates to discuss grove issues directly with experts Mike Thomsett and Dr Robert Spooner-Hart.

And Carter's top pick?

"It was all good. I really enjoyed the Conference Dinner – and then the Awards Dinner was another fantastic night. It's so good to see people getting their awards and feeling proud of all the hard work they put throughout the year."

Momentum building

Seymour agreed about the strong interactive 'vibe' around this year's event.

"The dinners were really popular and networking throughout the Conference was strong," he said.

"There was a good cross-section of the industry there, from new people to those who've been around for a long time, and I think everyone got a lot out of the interactions which came out of that.

"The other thing I felt was that people are feeling better - good, in fact - about being in the business. They can feel the momentum building again, in terms of the industry working together and also in the opportunities presenting themselves, particularly around table olives and niche markets.

"All up I think a great time was had by

all, both professionally and socially, and on behalf of the AOA Board and the organising team, I want to say a big thank you to everyone who attended, participated and volunteered their time to make this year's conference and trade exhibition such a successful and enjoyable event.

"And now we're straight into planning for the 2020 conference, which we're very pleased to confirm will be in Devonport, Tasmania.

"We've learned a lot from the last two conferences, and think we've got a pretty good handle on what delegates are looking for in the event, so we're looking forward to creating another jam-packed quality program of plenary sessions, field sessions and industry networking functions to enjoy next year."

The National Olive Conference & Trade Exhibition is facilitated through the Hort Innovation Olive Fund. It is partially funded by Hort Innovation using the olive R&D levy, with in-kind contributions from the Australian Olive Association and funding from the Australian Government. The event is also supported by Destination NSW and a range of industry sponsors and exhibitors.



Is Xylella a threat to Australian olives?

Craig Elliott

National Xylella Co-ordinator; Manager, National Xylella Preparedness Program

Most olive growers will be aware of the impact *Xylella fastidiosa* is having on European olive growers but would the arrival of the bacterium in Australia create the same problem and damage at the same scale?

This is one of the issues that the National Xylella Preparedness Program is considering. Co-funded by Hort Innovation and Wine Australia, the National Xylella Preparedness Program aims to ensure that the Australian horticulture and wine sectors are ready for Xylella if it arrives in Australia.

The impact

Images from the Apulia region in Italy have shown the devastating effect of Xylella, with groves and centuries old olive trees destroyed. Behind those images is the effect that this would have had on growers and the surrounding communities economically, along with the social and cultural impacts. The outbreak has reportedly resulted in over 22 million olive trees caught in the infected or containment zones and over 50000 hectares of olive groves destroyed; including 50% of the production area in Lecce province

and up to 80-90% of trees on some properties. The flow-on effects have seen between 10%-40% in production losses and costs estimated at between 390 million and 1.2 billion Euros, depending on which report you read.

Australian modelling

The olive industry is just one sector at risk from Xylella, with over 560 plant species now listed in the host range. Modelling has been completed for the Australian wine and grape industries on the likely impact of different outbreak scenarios and the potential costs have been assessed as between \$2 billion and just under \$8 billion over a 50 year period, accounting for lost production and management costs. Work is underway under the National Xylella Preparedness Program to complete similar modelling for other at risk crops as this will provide key data.

The Californian experience

Comparing the Italian situation with how California has managed Xylella identifies two key differences. California may be regarded as the 'home' of Xylella as it was first

described there, by virtue of Pierce's Disease in grapevines, in the late 1800's. Evolutionary genomics indicates, however, that it ultimately originated from central America.

California undertakes a relatively effective program managing Xylella, with the focus being on containing their key insect vector (the glassy winged sharpshooter or GWSS) to southern areas while research to breed genetically tolerant grapevines is completed.

While Xylella is present in northern areas of California along with a number of less effective or damaging insect vectors, the impact is less due to the absence of the GWSS and an ongoing program of removing and replacing infected vines. Government and industry bodies manage the program to exclude GWSS from the northern areas, resulting in significantly less economic impacts than if the GWSS was present and infection loads were much higher in those areas.

Compliance and response the key

We've observed that high levels of compliance for plant movement



regulations, rapid response to incursions of GWSS into new areas and very strong industry support and investment in the research and management programs also underpins the Californian program. In contrast, it appears the Italian situation struggled with suppressing their key insect vector (the meadow spittlebug) and was undermined by political and community opposition to control measures. As a result the 'front' of the outbreak has gradually moved northward since its initial detection in 2013.

Lessons learned

The experiences in California and Italy provide good lessons for regions like Australia where *Xylella* has not yet been detected. Work in Australia is currently focused on strengthening our diagnostic capability so the *Xylella* subspecies and genotype can be confirmed quickly. This will help determine the host plants at risk and help commence the response to an outbreak more rapidly, as well as ensure delimiting surveillance and containment efforts are more targeted and efficient.

Industry funding has been secured to research potential insect vectors in Australia and it is hoped that this will be supplemented by government funding in the upcoming year. This is also important for response planning, to understand how effective specific insects are at acquiring the bacterium from infected plants and then transmitting it to new plants.

Alongside this are discussions on the potential use of multispectral satellite imagery or aerial photography. Used overseas, this is

indicating the ability to detect *Xylella* infections prior to visual symptoms being detected through human inspection, providing the emergency response the best chance of success.

What you can do

Growers have a critical role in this, both in terms of helping prevent an incursion as well as being prepared for the worst case scenario:

- Only source plant material from quality nurseries who demonstrate strong biosecurity hygiene practices;
- Monitor your grove for any unusual signs that may show a pest or disease outbreak;
- Train your staff to identify possible biosecurity outbreaks and have a response plan in place to contain any new pests or diseases;
- Report suspect outbreaks to the Plant Biosecurity Hotline on 1800 084 881;
- Consider how your business would manage during a biosecurity incident if the movement of plants, fruit and even people and machinery was restricted or prohibited;
- Make biosecurity a part of local discussions - share information and work together to be prepared for biosecurity incidents;
- Don't bypass biosecurity laws and report anyone who does - they're putting your industry, your community and your business at risk.

Research Recap

PROJECT NAME: *Xylella* co-ordinator (MT17006)

PROJECT AIM: To ensure national awareness of the threat of *Xylella fastidiosa*, and to develop cross-sectoral biosecurity preparedness and prevention strategies

PROJECT PARTNER: Plant Biosecurity Research Initiative (PBRI)

FUNDING: Hort Innovation Apple and Pear, Avocado, Citrus, Cherry, Dried Grape, Nursery, Olive, Prune, Raspberry and Blackberry, Strawberry, Summerfruit and Table Grape Funds

PROJECT TIMEFRAME: Ongoing

KEY INFORMATION:

- *Xylella fastidiosa* is the current #1 plant biosecurity risk for Australia
- Australia is currently free of *Xylella* but it has recently spread across olive-producing European countries
- To date destruction of infected plant material and control of carriers are the only control methods
- Key to Australia's protection from *Xylella* is the ability for early detection, with containment and eradication tools at the ready

The National *Xylella* Preparedness Program is jointly funded by Hort Innovation, through the cross-industry levy project *Xylella* Co-ordinator (MT 17006), and Wine Australia.



AOA and Linda Costa hit the road for National Table Olive Workshop tour

Internationally-renowned table olive consultant Linda Costa from South Africa is returning to Australia in mid-February 2020 to deliver a series of one-day workshops around the country.

Following highly-acclaimed half day workshops at the National Olive Industry Conferences in Wagga in 2018 and Albury this year, Linda is working with the AOA to deliver a full day program in each Australian

state. This will ensure that all those interested in adding table olive production to their business mix, or wanting to improve their current operations, can access the detailed knowledge required for consistent production of high quality table olives.

Save the date – and register ASAP!

Registration will open shortly via the *OliveBiz* events page. Numbers for

each workshop are limited to ensure an interactive experience, and Linda's expertise and popular style will ensure places are in high demand, so prompt registration is recommended.

Details

Workshops will be held at the following locations and dates, with venues TBC:

Hobart: Wednesday, 19 February

Melbourne: Friday, 21 February

Adelaide: Sunday, 23 February

Hunter Valley: Tuesday, 25 February

Southern Tablelands: Thursday, 27 February

Perth: Sunday, 1 March

The program will run from 8am-5.30pm, followed by a sausage sizzle and drinks until 7.30pm.

The all-inclusive cost of each event is \$120 for levy payers and \$150 for others.



Draft workshop program

8.00 - 8.30: Registration, tea/coffee

8.30 - 9.00: Economic Context - market overview, cost structure

9.00 - 11.00: Principles of Table Olive Fermentation - different methods of processing olive fruit

11.00 - 11.30: Break

11.30 - 12.30: Cultivar Conundrum - including tasting of a wide range of cultivars. This will provide reference to the various methods discussed earlier.

12.30 - 1.30: Lunch

1.30 - 3.00: Spoilage Issues and Corrective Actions

3.00 - 3.30 : Australian Food Safety Requirements

3.30 - 4.00: Break

4:00 - 5:30: Table Olives as a Functional Food. Maintaining Quality Standards, While Meeting Consumer Demands.

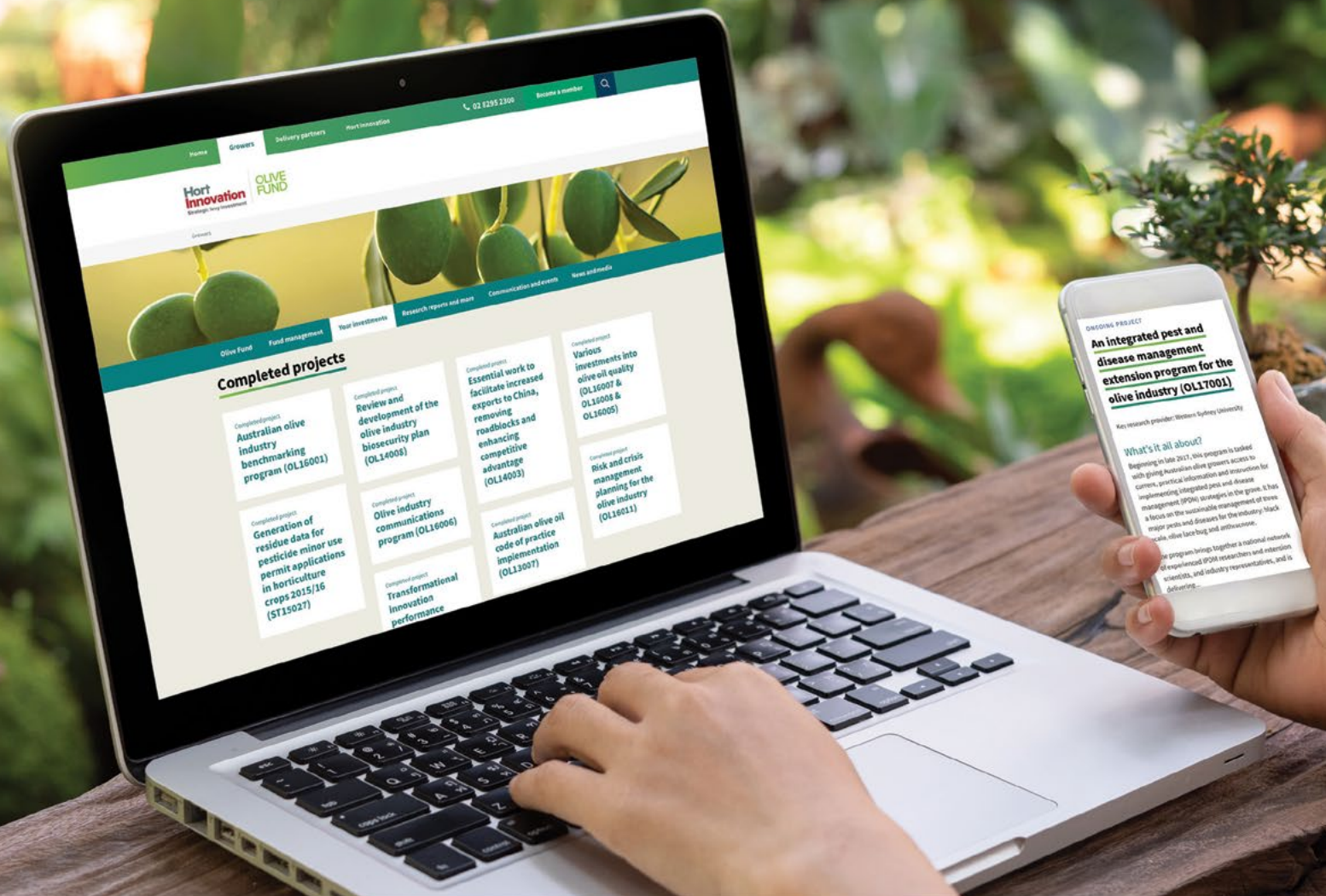
5.30 - 7.30: Drinks and sausage sizzle

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The National Table Olive Workshops are part of the Olive levy project Australian olive industry communications and extension program (OL18000), funded by Hort Innovation, using the Hort Innovation olive research and development levy, co-investment from the Australian Olive Association and contributions from the Australian Government.

Hort Innovation
Strategic levy investment

OLIVE FUND

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The Olive Fund has a new website

Hort Innovation's new website allows the olive industry to find more information and more resources quickly and easily.

Six pages of industry-specific content provide you with:

- Up-to-date details on levy fund management
- All ongoing investments with updates, advice and actions you can take now
- Completed investments with user-friendly summaries, final research reports and more
- More resources, information and tools than ever before
- Ways to connect with industry and people you can contact now.

NEW – completed investments:

- **View a user-friendly summary of what the investment achieved**
- **Download the final research report with in-depth information**
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horticulture.com.au/olive

2020 AOA Olive Oil Processing Workshop – Save the date

Making great EVOO is all about ensuring quality at every stage of the process, starting in the grove and way before harvest. That was the key message of the AOA Olive Oil Processing Workshop, held in April in Boort, Victoria, and one which guided the 2019 harvest of the lucky growers who nabbed places at this year's sell-out event.

For those disappointed growers who missed out, the great news is that it's on again in 2020!

Repeating the successful 2019 format, but with an expanded timeframe following attendee feedback, the course will again be run jointly by international processing expert Pablo Canamasas and 2019 AIOA Best of Show winners Peter and Marlies Eicher of Salute Oliva.

The comprehensive program covers every aspect of processing quality, from grove management for optimal fruit quality to best-practice processing and storage. Along the way you'll learn a lot about olive oil chemistry, and find the answers the many of the "why did/does that happen to my oil?" questions you've always wanted to ask.

And you'll be welcome to do so: the presenters' combined expertise and practical experience, along with their shared approachability, ensure that the most complex detail is presented in an interactive, user-friendly format – while also catering for growers and producers at every stage and capacity.

Don't miss out - register your interest now

The course is tentatively scheduled for Monday, 20 through Wednesday, 22 April, with dates to be confirmed

in the new year. As the fruit for the trials is provided by Boundary Bend, the exact timing is dependent on their harvest and we hope to be able to confirm dates in January.

Numbers will again be limited to ensure a hands-on learning experience for all attendees, so if you're keen to attend, please register your interest now. Anyone who put their name on the waiting list for the 2019 event is also urged to re-confirm your interest for the 2020 workshop.



Want to know more?

An overview of the information shared at the 2019 workshop can be found in the June edition of R&D Insights on the OliveBiz website – www.olivebiz.com.au.

The statistical results of the comparative trials carried out during the practical session can also be found in the article *AOA Processing Workshop: efficiency by numbers*, published in the September edition of *Olivegrower & Processor*.

Email AOA Admin Manager Liz Bouzoudis at secretariat@australianolives.com.au NOW so you don't miss out!

The 2020 AOA Olive Oil Processing Workshop is part of the Olive levy project Australian olive industry communications and extension program (OL18000), funded by Hort Innovation, using the Hort Innovation olive research and development levy, co-investment from the Australian Olive Association and contributions from the Australian Government.

