

R&D INSIGHTS

THE LATEST UPDATES ON R&D WITHIN THE OLIVE INDUSTRY | JUNE 2023



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.

OWI launches go-to resource on EVOO and health

Understanding the myriad health benefits of extra virgin olive oil has been made much easier, thanks to a new resource produced by the Olive Wellness Institute (OWI).

The OWI's *Extra Virgin Olive Oil Health and Nutrition Report 2023* was launched on 30 March at a lunch event for a group of 30 engaged and influential Australian health care professionals, who were introduced to the resource by the OWI's education team.

Held at Gilson Restaurant in South Yarra, Melbourne, the event featured a menu of dishes featuring Australian EVOO, and guests left with their own sample bottle of OWI-labelled EVOO to use and share.

Accessible information

OWI Healthcare Professional Education Manager Sian Armstrong said the report aims to increase the accessibility of information around the health benefits of EVOO.

"We now have a wealth of peer-reviewed research and other information about EVOO and health, and we thought it would be a really good idea to have all of it in one spot, so easily accessible," she said.

"It was produced predominantly with health professionals in mind, as the go-to resource for all things EVOO and health, but we made sure that it's beautifully designed and easy to read, so suits a much wider audience.



OWI Healthcare Professional Education Manager Sian Armstrong launched the report to a gathering of influential Australian health care professionals.

"We can take it with us to conferences or other events and give it to anyone interested in extra virgin olive oil. After reading it they should have a pretty good understanding of what EVOO is, how it's made and, most importantly, the health benefits of EVOO."

Sustainability to safety

Armstrong said the report focuses on both the recognition of EVOO as one of the world's healthiest oils and its versatility in the kitchen.

"The report contains a user-friendly "summary" of the health benefits of EVOO, which range from heart health to mental health and general wellbeing. There's also information on the sustainability of EVOO - an increasingly important factor in

consumer's consumption and purchase choices - and an explanation of why it is the safest and most versatile oil for cooking," she said.

"It even covers "the big myth" around smoke point, and why the design of





The report was introduced by author and accredited practicing dietitian Teri Lichtenstein over a lunch menu featuring Australian EVOO.

Australia's front of pack labelling system, the Health Star Rating (HSR) system, doesn't work for foods like EVOO.

"And while the information is summarized for accessibility, it takes up 35 jam-packed pages (plus a few more of references!), so there's really wide coverage of all aspects of EVOO production, health benefits and superiority in cooking."

Here are just some of the topics covered:

- Extra Virgin Olive Oil - Nature's Liquid Gold
- What is unique about Extra Virgin Olive Oil?
- Types and grades of olive oil
- Extra Virgin Olive Oil compared to other edible oils
- Global production of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- Nutrient Composition of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- Dietary Guidelines
- Health Benefits of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- Cooking with Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- How to store Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- Sustainability

Presenters and professionals

Armstrong said the launch audience packed a punch in terms of health industry reach, as did the guest presenters.

"The guests were all health care professionals and came from across a wide range of practice areas - public health nutritionists and dietitians



Dr Flavia Fayet-Moore presented recent research on evaluating the health benefits of edible oils.

from organisations like the Heart Foundation and Nutrition Australia; academics; and also private health care professionals," she said.

"The author of the report, Teri Lichtenstein, is an accredited practicing dietitian and director of nutrition marketing consultancy FoodBytes. She presented a taste of what's in the report and the science behind it.

"And Dr Flavia Fayet-Moore talked about recent research on how we should judge edible oils, evaluating and rating them in terms of health benefits rather than just looking at the fatty acids.

"She's a scientist, nutritionist and researcher, CEO of Nutrition Research Australia and a member of the OWI Scientific Advisory panel, so is highly respected internationally in the health and nutrition field."

Enthusiastic feedback

The launch had immediate impact, Armstrong said, with word getting around and strong demand for the report.

"It went really well and we had some great feedback on the report. People were really excited to read it," she said.

"Many of the guests have strong social media followings and we've also seen a good response to social media posts about the report since. Lots of people have been sharing it and people are responding really well: we had 100 downloads in the first couple of days, with a number of those new email subscribers.

"The OWI has shared it on our channels too, of course, and also sent



the details and link to all our existing subscribers.

Accessible information

"We're excited to now have all of this information in one spot, in a really accessible format, and also to have the summary of the scientific literature.

"It's available to download on the OWI website and we're hoping olive growers will access it, for their own knowledge and also to point others to the information when they have questions.

"We'd love everyone to share it with their networks, and maybe display a copy at their Farmers Market stand with the web address for downloads. The more people reading it, the greater the understanding of why EVOO is so good for you, and the greater the benefit for the whole industry!"

Hard copy available

The Olive Wellness Institute has printed an additional quantity of hard copies of the report, which are available for growers on request. Just email the team at info@olivewellnessinstitute.org with your details and they'll send you one.

More information: www.olivewellnessinstitute.org, where you'll find the report for download under Resources.



VIC field day boosts basics knowledge and industry connections

Continuing the industry's run of informative and practical extension events, another successful olive growing field day was run on Sunday, 26 March at Seymour in Victoria.

The AOA and regional Victorian grower group the Goulburn Strathbogrie Olive Growers Association (GSOGA) combined resources to plan and run the event, which was hosted by growers Andrea and David Sefton.

Information was targeted to assist both new and experienced olive producers and the full-day 'Back to Basics' program was just that, looking at baseline practices and issues around ensuring a healthy, productive grove: soil nutrition; soil test results; olive pests and diseases; and irrigation issues.

The 50 attendees encompassed the whole gamut of industry experience, with feedback confirming the value of the information for all.

Planning to plant

Hailley Kent is new to the industry and is working towards planting a grove later this year on her property at Wondilagong near Bright. She said they want to make sure they do it right, so they joined the AOA and have already attended several industry field days.



"I really like these events because they go through someone's grove, either established or newer, and you get to see how they're doing everything - including areas where they might need to learn or have some issues," she said.

"You get access to people's

knowledge and all their experience, the opportunity to chat to them about it, and I can ask any questions that I have.

"We're setting up from the start, so things like spacings, varieties and irrigation are high on my information list. People have shared their



experiences of having to re-do them, as they weren't done correctly, so we want to do it all properly from the start to reduce any inefficiencies and need for change.

"The different topics at this field day were really good for us in getting established, and the best thing was hearing what hasn't worked and what other people find useful. You've really got to go to your own industry to learn that.

"And olive people are all really lovely - the whole olive community has been wonderful to us. They want to share all their experience and knowledge, rather than keep it to themselves.

"The most valuable thing is being able to ask questions of more experienced people ... listening to other farmers with advice on what works for them, what doesn't."

"These field days are invaluable and for anyone wondering whether they should attend, I'd say definitely go. Even if you're established there are new things to learn, and you gain the benefits of other people's experience of different things they might be trying."

Two years in

It's now two and a half years since field day hosts Andrea and David Sefton bought a 20-year-old grove, and Andrea said they're still on a learning curve.

"So hosting the field day was a great opportunity for us, as we had the experts coming and having a look at our grove, particularly seeing whether we did have an issue or not with pests and disease," she said.

"Also in figuring out more about what we've got to get done in terms of making sure the soil side of things is correct. We went to the AOA Healthy Soil field day and were able to build

Want a field day in your region?

The AOA's field days are great events, tackling timely issues for olive businesses of all sizes and situations.

And while the national series' have a set focus (like the Healthy Soils roadshow), individual field days throughout the year are designed to tackle more timely and topical issues specific to regions.

You and your neighbours may have been badly hit by unseasonal frost and are not sure how to care for your trees; you might be in a previously higher rainfall area which is now in drought, and need some insight into irrigation practices; or maybe a nasty olive pest or disease has found its way into your region ... whatever the issue, getting together with a bunch of industry experts and talking it through is a great way to find a solution.

The olive levy-funded industry extension project is all about getting information and answers out to growers to help you do business better, and have better businesses. So whether you've got issues in your region or a topic you all want to know more about, get in touch with the AOA about running a field day in your area.

How about hosting it?

There are lots of benefits in hosting an AOA field day, most importantly the opportunity to gain hands-on expert advice on any issues in your grove. Or maybe you need some guidance on your pruning technique.

It's also a great way to showcase what you're doing well, or the solutions you've found to problems you've had, and share your experience and advice with other growers.

And don't worry, it's not hard - or expensive. The AOA will work with you on arrangements that suit your situation and facilities, help organise what's needed and cover the costs of the day.

What an opportunity!

If you're keen to take it up, contact AOA Administration Manager Liz Bouzoudis at secretariat@australianolives.com.au and register your interest.



on that information at this one.

“The other thing was being able to speak with other people in the area about what they do. We had an issue with irrigation - it’s there but hasn’t been used - so to be able to get feedback on that was great for us. Hearing what people do, what works and what doesn’t.

“I’d recommend others to go to industry field days, and also to host. You learn a lot about your grove, and get a lot of answers. We also got a lot of contacts, which is great. It’s really good getting together with people who have the same issues, or different ones, and seeing how you can deal with them.

“We’ll definitely be going to more AOA events and are already planning for the Canberra Conference.”

Knowledge transfer

Andrew Ashby came all the way from New Zealand for the field day, piggy-backing the event with attendance at the AOA’s Processing Workshop in SA a couple of weeks later.

He said that while there are significant differences in grove management issues in the two countries, he took plenty away from the event.

“I’m quite surprised how much in the grove does translate,” he said.

“Overall the information transferred

well, especially the information from Robert Spooner-Hart on pests and a few of the diseases we get in New Zealand. One of the ideas in particular, of concentrating on the diseased trees rather than the whole grove, was really valuable - and sensible, if you think about it. Being made aware of that was quite valuable, and the soil aspect was also quite interesting - learning more about the caring for the soil.

“It was also quite a nice lunch - the catering was top notch.

“And at under \$60, it was cheap as chips. It was good value for me to come over for and I’d recommend them to anyone in Australia that can make it.”

Experienced growers

Rob Whyte and Melanie Coid are comparative ‘old timers’, having run their award-winning Gooramadda Olives grove and business for the past 10 years. They’re still enthusiastic attendees at industry field days, which Melanie said have benefits far beyond the official program.

“Field days are invaluable to all growers - new owners and ones who’ve had skin in the game for a long time,” she said.

“Sometimes you get a refresher on something you may have forgotten, or maybe you’ve had something new

“Hosting the field day was a great opportunity for us, as we had the experts coming and having a look at our grove.”

come up that you’re not sure how to deal with. You go to a field day and you’ve got knowledgeable people like Robert Spooner-Hart on hand to pick their brain and get solutions, along with a whole bunch of other growers who may have had the same issue or query and found the answer.

“We went to this one for a couple of reasons: the information on offer, and we also wanted to connect with other growers - that’s really important. You might just need a little piece of information on equipment, for example - sourcing or repairing it, etc. It takes a long time to build that knowledge but you’re likely to find someone at a field day who knows the answer.

“Connections in the industry are so important, and industry events are great places to make those connections.”

 This course is part of the Olive levy project Australian olive industry communications and extension program (OL22000), 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.

Processing course continues to impress and inspire

When it comes to learning opportunities, the AOA's annual Olive Oil Processing Course is one of the most significant on the industry extension calendar. The intensive two-day event provides attendees with in-depth insight into the elements affecting olive oil quality, along with practical experience of the important differences that working with those elements can have.

This year's program was once again delivered face-to-face by international master olive miller Pablo Canamasas, with a change of venue to the Mypolonga grove and production facility of South Australian producer Rio Vista Olives. Rio Vista's multi-award-winning miller Jared Bettio hosted and co-presented with Canamasas, sharing his practices and experience, and introducing attendees to the technology of the company's new processing equipment.

As in previous years, the comprehensive course covered every aspect of processing EVOO, from grove management for optimal fruit quality to best-practice processing and storage. Attendees also learned about olive oil chemistry and the practical aspects of oil extraction, and a guided tasting session by internationally-qualified olive oil sommelier and AIOA judge Sarah Ascuitto was a welcome new addition to the program.

And once again, the event earned praise from across the range of industry participants.



Hort Innovation Industry Communications Project Manager Sharon Watt had her first tasting of freshly-extracted EVOO at the course.

Learning the secrets

Long Paddock Olive Rustlers member Ed Knight made the long drive from Wagga Wagga for the workshop and said it was worth every kilometre.

"The organising was brilliant. Everyone involved was really keen and the main presenter, Pablo, was just brilliant. He really put his heart and soul into it," he said.

"The friendliness and respect from all the attendees and organisers was greatly appreciated, and the catering was over the moon.

"I learned so much but the most

important was about the warming of the fruit. We're processing too cold, so we've got to work out a way to do that now. Also that the secret to good EVOO is good machinery, good people and good fruit.

"It was most definitely worth the drive, and I'll be coming back again."

Awesomely informative

Melissa and Eric Verecondi of Clare Estate - are relative newbies to the EVOO processing game, having bought an existing grove in recent years. They're still finishing a much-needed major pruning of the entire grove but last year bought a small press and ran their first estate processing through it.

Their overall description of the workshop was "awesome, and very informative".

"Jared is very approachable and Pablo is just incredible. They're both so knowledgeable - and both such nice guys too," Eric said.

"I know a lot more now about how I can try to improve the processing,



and we've learned a lot about what we need to be able to do things better. Most importantly, we've learned we need a bigger press."

For Melissa, all that new knowledge has translated into enthusiasm for the job ahead.

"I'm keen to get home and look at my olive trees. I feel totally energetic and enthusiastic for the harvest," she said.

"We learned so much, and it was well worth the money, time and effort in coming - definitely good bang for your buck! And the food was beautiful, which is always a bonus."

Third time attendee

Rod Lingard, Chairman of award-winning New Zealand producer The Olive Press, has attended the AOA Processing Workshop twice before. That didn't stop him coming a third time, this year bringing with him two young Māori cadets.

He says the workshop is a fantastic introduction for anyone looking to make a career in olives.

"Our company's new cadets were like sponges," he said.

"They soaked up the first day presentations, quizzed me late that night about the global olive business, then fronted at 6am the following morning to see Jared and his team harvesting the olives for the workshop demos.

"And Rio Vista was an ideal venue for us this year with our new cadets. We operate the same harvesting and processing technologies - plus, of course, we have the shared affinity of being joint Best Flavoured Oil of Show winners at the 2020 Australian International Olive Awards!"

Processing and more

Rod said he always learns something new from the workshop.

"It's also a great place for networking and catching up on the latest trends and opportunities," he said.

"For example, chatting with Michael (Southan) gave me huge insights into the potential for olives to be at the forefront of our respective countries' climate change and carbon reduction strategies."



Pre-event priming

Attendance also once again included access to a four-hour pre-event webinar by Canamasas, covering theoretical learning including grove management practices and their impact on quality, determining optimal harvesting times, oil storage and filtration, and the parameters determining olive oil quality and shelf life.

Fellow New Zealander Andrew Ashby said the two-stage format is a great idea.

"All the chemical stuff was sent out prior so you could look at it in your own time," he said.

"I've attended courses in past and by the time you get to the chemical side of things you're exhausted. With this one I picked up a lot more than I have in the past just because of having all that information prior to attending. That was really valuable."

Important outcomes

AOA CEO Michael Southan said this year's event was a success on many fronts.

"It was a terrific course, and a little different from last year's," he said.

"Pablo was excited to see some equipment he hasn't seen and worked with before, so for him it was different, and everyone was interested to see the facilities that Rio Vista have. It was great that everything could be held there - the presentations, the dinner and processing - and it worked really well.

"We had people there who were trying to determine whether to invest



in a mill or not, who said that what they learned helped them make the decision as to which path they would follow. That's just as important an outcome, helping people work out whether it's practical for them or not.

"And it was great to see people from as far away as New South Wales and New Zealand attending. It's proof of the value of the course and the information shared, and also the enthusiasm of the industry to keep increasing production quality."

The AOA Processing Course will be held again in April 2024, with a similar program and schedule (location TBC). Places are always limited, so if you haven't attended yet - or have want a refresher - contact Liz Bouzoudis at secretariat@australianolives.com.au to reserve your place for this 'must-do' learning event.

This course is part of the Olive levy project Australian olive industry communications and extension program (OL22000), 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.



Xylella field training at 2023 national Diagnostics and Surveillance Workshop

***Xylella fastidiosa*, Australia's number one national priority plant pest and one of the greatest threats to the olive industry across the globe, was a practical focus topic of the recent Annual Diagnostics and Surveillance Workshop (ADSW) run by Plant Health Australia (PHA).**

ADSW 2023

Held in Canberra in May, the three-day event involved 200 delegates from the National Plant Biosecurity and Diagnostic Network - 110 in person and 90 online - and a range of national and international expert presenters.

Themed *Implementation through connections*, the program consisted of presentation sessions, panel discussions, training workshops and a field day, which allowed diagnosticians and surveillance practitioners to come together and share knowledge and learnings.

Topics covered included new technologies; connecting surveillance and diagnostic practitioners; outreach and engagement; R&D implementation to connect wider industry; building blocks of the plant

biosecurity system; and connections across Australia's National Surveillance Protocols and National Diagnostic Protocols.

The final day saw delegates attend a field training activity at the Australian National Botanical Gardens, where they participated in surveillance of *Xylella fastidiosa* (based on National Diagnostic Protocol Section 9), and diagnostics using loop mediated isothermal amplification (LAMP) analysis and Agdia kit for Xylella.

Notes: LAMP is a method of testing used for viral RNA and DNA detection well-suited for field diagnostics.

Agdia are branded test kits designed specifically for plant pathogens and transgenic (GMO) traits.

Critical protocols

"ADSW 2023 aimed to enhance and strengthen Australia's diagnostic and surveillance capacity and capability to identify priority plant pests that impact on plant industries, environment and the community," said Dr Lucy Tran-Nguyen, PHA General Manager, Partnerships and Innovation.

"National Diagnostic Protocols (NDP) and National Surveillance Protocols (NSP) are critical as the primary source of information in plant biosecurity diagnostics and surveillance activities. It was exciting to see the draft Xylella NDP be applied in a training exercise at ADSW2023.

"The surveillance work instruction developed from NDP Section 9 was used for sampling host species and tested using the assays described in the NDP. As expected, testing showed the samples were free from Xylella, given that it is currently not present in Australia or New Zealand."

ADSW2023 was facilitated by PHA and funded by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) as a part of the 'National Plant Biosecurity Diagnostics and Surveillance Professional Development and Protocols' projects.

More information: www.planthealthaustralia.com.au; www.plantbiosecuritydiagnostics.net.au