



R&D Insights goes 100% digital

This edition of *R&D Insights* marks the first as a 100% digital publication, following the 'retirement' of the industry print journal *Australian & New Zealand Olivegrower & Processor*.

Delivered as part of the *Olive industry communications and extension program* (OL22000), *R&D Insights* continues to be distributed quarterly, now via email, providing updates and outcomes from Hort Innovation Olive Levy R&D projects. Along with the monthly *Grove Innovation* e-newsletter, all editions of *R&D Insights* can also be found among the wealth of resources available on the *OliveBiz* website [here](#).

We welcome new readers now accessing the publication via the AOA's e-mailing list, and hope you're inspired to catch up on previous levy R&D news via the link above.

Monitoring project aims to boost EVOO quality and consumer confidence

Olive oil quality has been under the spotlight in recent years, with fraudulent activity a regular feature of media coverage. The Australian industry has now also taken the magnifying glass to the issue, scrutinising and clarifying quality in the Australian marketplace via the Hort Innovation Olive Levy R&D project *Olive oil quality monitoring program* (OL23002).

Being undertaken by the Australian Olive Association (AOA), the three-year project is monitoring compliance with the *Australian Standard for Olive oils and olive-pomace oils* (AS5264-2011) by testing a cross-section of

olive oils being sold across retail, food service and other channels throughout Australia.

The results will not only determine the level of compliance with the Australian Standard but also allow the association to identify non-compliant products, so it can then provide assistance with quality improvement.

The end aim is to ensure consumer confidence in the quality and value of the olive oil they are purchasing, and also to protect Australian producers' returns, ensuring that they can compete on quality and on a level playing field.



"The project is also an opportunity to let producers know that the Australian Olive Association is here to help with any quality issues. There are resources available to assist them, both on the AOA's website and others we can point them to."

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'Extra virgin' confirmation

The project commenced in the second half of 2024, following ongoing reports of escalating olive oil fraud across the Northern Hemisphere.

“Several consecutive disastrous seasons, especially in Spain, the world’s largest producer, has seen a global shortage of olive oil in recent years,” AOA CEO Michael Southan said.

“That has seen prices skyrocket - particularly for extra virgin olive oil, which became literally ‘liquid gold’ - which in turn has seen a massive increase in criminal activity around olive production in Europe. It’s been extreme and widespread, from theft of fruit from trees and oil from storage facilities to the fraudulent sale of vegetable oils and blends as extra virgin olive oil.

“While we haven’t had reports of thefts in Australia, it was important that we know whether any similar activity is happening in Australia. The risk of imported products not

being true to label was obviously very real, given the shortage overseas, but we also need to determine whether we have any quality issues here.

“Hort Innovation agreed that the best way to do that was by a market-wide testing program to confirm that ‘extra virgin’ olive oil currently being sold in Australia is exactly that.”

Educative, not punitive

Southan said the program aim is for a positive outcome, no matter what the testing finds.

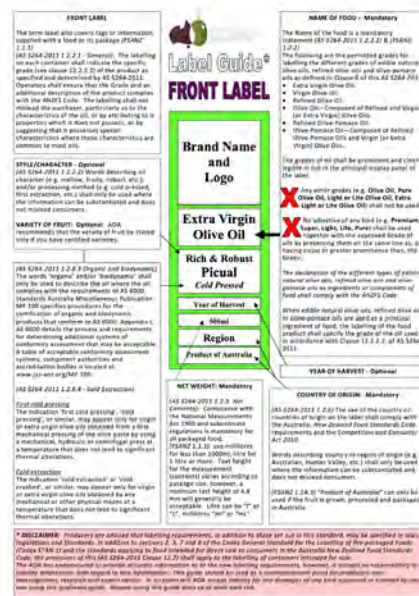
"It's more carrot than stick, and educative rather than punitive," he said.

“It’s not about ruining anyone’s business, it’s about identifying what problems may be out there and giving producers the information and skills they need to fix them.

“The lab testing will allow us to identify quality issues, and we’ll also be looking for any labelling issues while we do it - for example, inaccurate best before dates and

missing mandated label information.

“Once we’ve clarified any issues, we’ll then be working with the producers or brands to resolve them - and importantly, we’ll be doing that individually and



The program will also identify labelling issues, with non-compliant producers referred to resources including the AOA's labelling guide for assistance.

confidentially. There'll be no public 'outing', rather a constructive process of notification and assistance.

"Where there are persistent problems with particular brands and the relevant company is unwilling to take corrective action, however, the matter may be reported to the ACCC for their action. And if we were to find anything which points to deliberate fraudulent activity, we will of course be passing that information on to the relevant regulatory bodies."

Positive outcomes

The end result, Southan says, is a win-win situation.

"It's a practical, solution-based process through which we can raise the overall standard of Australian EVOO to an even higher level. That gives consumers confidence that when they buy a product labelled EVOO, that's exactly what they're getting, which in turn increases sales and business viability for our producers.

"And we know that it works, as previous compliance monitoring programs undertaken via the levy projects OL13007, *Australian olive oil code of practice implementation* and OL17006, *Extending OliveCare to foster excellence in production of Australian olives*, saw a dramatic increase in overall quality across the supply chain."

Methodology

A total of 120 EVOO samples will be collected and tested over the project's three-year life (40 per year; 20 reported on per six-monthly report).

Testing will be against the *Australian Standard for Olive oils and olive-pomace oils - AS5264-2011*, which describes the minimum quality parameters for each grade of olive oil, Australian Consumer Law and Food Labelling Regulations.

Laboratory and sensory testing will be undertaken by NATA-accredited facilities Modern Olives Laboratory and NSW DPIRD AgEnviro Labs.

Samples will be tested for:

- **Chemical:** Free Fatty Acid content (FFA), Peroxide Value (PV), UV Coefficients, Pyrophytins (PPPs), 1,2-diacylglycerols (DAGs) and Oxidative Stability (Induction time).
- **Sensory:** defects, fruitiness, bitterness and pungency.
- **Labelling requirements (as per AS5265-2011):** Lot Identification/ Batch Number, Net Contents, Producer Name and Address, Country of Origin, Best Before Date, Correctly Labelled as EVOO.

Aggregated data will be made available to the industry and where individual producers, processors or importers are identified as in breach of the Australian Standard or labelling laws, the AOA will communicate with them confidentially to assist them in meeting the required standards.

Sampling strategy

A Project Reference Group of industry stakeholders and Hort Innovation personnel was established at the start of the project to advise on the sampling strategy.

The sample selection aims to maximise the efficiency and value of the project and is therefore proportionally representative of the Australian marketplace, including imported, domestic, retail, farmers' markets, cellar doors, online and food service sectors for all grades of oil - extra-virgin through to refined.

As an in-kind contribution, the AOA is also providing the results from at least 100 olive oil samples entered into the Australian International Olive Awards each year. These results will be in addition to the samples tested as part of the project, and will not be included in the aggregated results, but add valuable data to the project by increasing the testing results of olive oils commercially available in Australia.

This assists the aim of further increasing the level of compliance to the Australian Standard by the end of the project.



Research Recap

PROJECT NAME: *Olive oil quality monitoring program (OL23002)*

PROJECT AIM: To monitor olive oil quality and compliance with Australian standards, to ensure consumer confidence in the quality and value of olive oil they are purchasing and that Australian producers can compete on quality.

RESEARCH PROVIDER: Australian Olive Association

FUNDING: Hort Innovation Olive Fund

PROJECT TERM: 3 years

PROJECT ENDS: 2027

KEY INFORMATION:

- *The Australian Standard for Olive oils and olive-pomace oils - AS5264-2011* describes the minimum quality parameters for each grade of olive oil.
- The program will determine the level of compliance with the Australian Standard and identify brand owners who need assistance with quality and compliance issues.
- 120 EVOO samples will be collected and tested over the project's three-year life (40 samples reported each year).
- Samples will be tested for Free Fatty Acid content, Peroxide Value, UV Coefficients, Pyrophytins (PPPs), DAGs (1,2-diacylglycerols), and sensory testing for defects, fruitiness, bitterness, and pungency.
- Where standards are not met, the Australian Olive Association will provide constructive feedback on test results and information on how to improve quality outcomes.

The Olive oil quality monitoring program (OL23002) is a strategic levy investment in the Hort Innovation Olive Fund, funded by Hort Innovation using the olive research and development levy, co-investment from the Australian Olive Association and contributions from the Australian Government.



AOA Processing Workshop heads to WA

We all know that good olive oil starts in the grove with best practice management. We also know that ensuring olive oil is extra virgin quality is all in the processing.

That knowledge is behind the annual AOA Processing Workshop, a two-day information-fest aimed at improving industry skills and knowledge around the crucial art of processing. Starting literally from the ground up, the workshop program shares the secrets of getting the most from your fruit, in terms of both oil quality and output.

This year the AOA team are heading west to Margaret River, WA, where the workshop will be hosted by Brett Roberts, manager at certified organic EVOO and flavoured oil producer Olio Bello.

Levy project learning

Run as part of the olive levy project *Australian olive industry communications and extension program* (OL22000), the Processing

Workshop is one of the most popular events on the AOA's calendar, drawing attendees from across Australia and overseas.

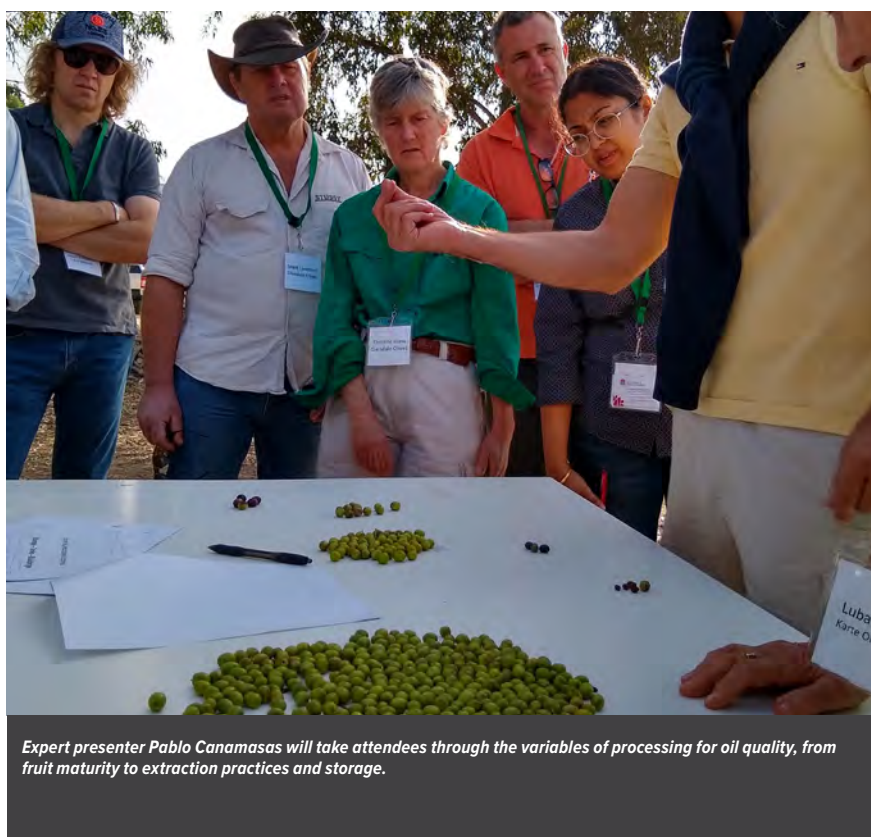
One of the main drawcards is presenter Pablo Canamasas, an international olive oil consultant, processing expert and EVOO judge. Pablo's technical knowledge and practical experience is second to none and his approachable, down-to-earth manner ensures the information is presented in a user-friendly format. And if it's not, or you've got a question around anything, Pablo's always happy to provide an answer.

From preparation to storage, and everything in between

The program runs across two days, starting with a theory session

covering a range of elements crucial to oil quality:

- **Pre-season arrangements** - pre-harvest operations set-up and organisation, oil chemistry basics and storage considerations;
- **Agronomical aspects impacting on oil quality** - including irrigation, pests and diseases, and determining optimal harvesting times;
- **Crushing and malaxing** - types of equipment, timing and impacts on quality;
- **Use of processing aids** - product and methodology options, impact on paste extractability and oil quality;
- **Centrifugation** – 2-phase vs 3 phase processing, horizontal vs vertical, operational parameters and impacts;
- **Oil storage and filtration** - best practice for quality preservation.



Expert presenter Pablo Canamasas will take attendees through the variables of processing for oil quality, from fruit maturity to extraction practices and storage.



Register early

Numbers for the Processing Workshop are limited, to ensure all participants have the chance to view the processing demonstrations and have their questions answered by Pablo. It's not surprising then that the event always sells out, so if you're keen to learn the science and best practice of producing high-quality EVOO, sign up NOW!

Access the full program details and register [here](#).

Value add with Back to Basics Field Day

Given the logistics of travelling between WA's production regions, the AOA has scheduled the WA Back to Basics (B2B) Field Day on the day prior to the Processing Workshop, providing the state's producers with an information double-header.

Being run as part of the NFF's National Horticulture Roadshow, the B2B Field Day aims to provide key information for new olive growers and those thinking about becoming olive growers. Feedback from the SA event confirmed that it also offers plenty for existing producers, with a comprehensive program covering site selection, varieties, irrigation, grove

management, pruning, pests and diseases and harvest options.

The AOA Back to Basics Field Day will be held on 15 March at Olivo Bello, Margaret River. Find out more and register [here](#).



2025 AOA Processing Workshop

WHEN: 16-17 April 2025

WHERE: Olivo Bello, 36 Armstrong Rd, Cowaramup 6284 Western Australia

PRESENTER: International Olive Oil Consultant Pablo Canamasas

COST: \$285 - AOA members/levy payers, \$385- non-member/processor/other industry

MORE INFORMATION: [Here](#)



Dr Stephen Quarrell Manager, Biosecurity Planning Plant Health Australia

Biosecurity planning for the future

The Australian olive industry faces many continually evolving threats from exotic pests and diseases. If one or more exotic olive pests or diseases such as Olive Fruit Fly (*Bactrocera oleae*) or Olive Quick Decline Syndrome, caused by the bacteria *Xylella fastidiosa*, become established in Australia, the cost of production or the ability to grow olive trees and produce oil could be severely impacted.

By building knowledge of the exotic pests and diseases that pose the greatest threat to olive production, improving biosecurity preparedness and response capability at both an industry and grove level, the long-term future of the Australian olive industry can be maintained.

New olive industry Biosecurity Plan

To prepare for exotic pest and disease risks, many agricultural industries develop and maintain a Biosecurity Plan. The current *Biosecurity Plan for the Olive Industry* was published in 2016 and is now due for review, to ensure the pests and diseases that pose the greatest threat to the industry are identified and that plans to improve biosecurity

preparedness continue.

Plant Health Australia (PHA), in collaboration with the Australian Olive Association, recently started a new five-year Horticulture Innovation Olive Levy-funded project that will develop a new Biosecurity Plan for the Australian olive industry.

The project brings together PHA's biosecurity planning expertise, pest and disease experts from key state and government agencies and leading olive growers to identify and address these rapidly growing challenges.

The new Biosecurity Plan will provide a framework for improved biosecurity preparedness within the Australian olive industry.

Three-stage planning process

There are three major components to the Biosecurity Plan project.

The first is the **review of all known exotic pests and diseases of olive production**. This species' review informs the development of risk ratings for each of the exotic pests identified.

These risk ratings focus on the potential of each pest to enter, establish and spread within Australia

and an estimate of their potential economic impact. The species that receive high risk overall rating are given 'High Priority Pest' (HPP) status.



ABOUT PHA

Plant Health Australia (PHA) is a public not-for-profit company, with members including the Australian Government, all state and territory governments, and 37 industry organisations representing all of Australia's major plant production industries.

It is the national co-ordinator of the government-industry partnership for plant biosecurity in Australia, bringing together expertise, knowledge and stakeholders to improve plant biosecurity and ensure a future-orientated and solutions-focused system.

PHA's activities are funded from annual subscriptions paid by members, with additional revenue from non-subscription funded projects. A \$0.10 per tonne component of the olive levy (total \$3.10 per tonne) goes to PHA.



The second component is an **analysis of the available preparedness resources in relation to the HPPs** including any Plans that have been developed to help government and industry respond to an incursion, factsheets on the HPPs, diagnostic protocols and a stocktake of available reference specimens. All of these resources are critical if and when an exotic pest is found, so it can be rapidly detected and responded to quickly to minimise the impacts to industry.

The third and final component is the **development of a Biosecurity Action Plan**. The Action Plan, developed with industry and government biosecurity specialists, outlines a range of biosecurity focussed RD&E needs, strategies and actions that will improve the industry's biosecurity preparedness and response potential, including those focussed on the HPPs highlighted in the first section of the Plan.

Annual review

Once completed, the Plan will be reviewed annually until the project's completion in 2029, to ensure the Biosecurity Plan's continual improvement throughout the five-year project and the partnership

between Government and industry is strengthened.

More information

You can access the current *Biosecurity Plan for the Olive Industry* on the AOA website [here](#).

There's also information around on-farm biosecurity best practice, including the six key ways to protect your property, in the *Farm Biosecurity Action Plan for Olive Growers* [here](#).



Research Recap

PROJECT NAME: *Protecting our groves: the olive industry biosecurity project (OL23001)*

PROJECT AIM: To improve the biosecurity preparedness in the olive industry by reviewing the industry's biosecurity threats and providing a framework for biosecurity activities.

RESEARCH PROVIDER: Plant Health Australia

FUNDING: Hort Innovation Olive Fund

PROJECT TERM: 5 years

PROJECT ENDS: 2029

KEY INFORMATION:

This project will improve the olive industry's current biosecurity preparedness and response capability by:

- Developing a Biosecurity Plan that identifies the exotic pests and diseases which pose the highest threat to the Australian olive industry.
- Highlighting actions including grove level activities, RD&E and surveillance programs that will reduce these biosecurity threats.
- Performing annual reviews of the Biosecurity Plan to ensure it continues to capture any changes in biosecurity threats and industry preparedness.





Save the dates

2025 AOA National Olive Industry Conference & Exhibition

Tuesday 28 October – optional Field Day

Wednesday 29 and Thursday, 30 October 2025

Hotel Grand Chancellor, Adelaide, SA

Program includes:

- Plenary sessions
- Field tour
- Industry Trade Exhibition
- Conference Dinner – Wednesday 29
- 2025 Australian International Olive Awards Presentation Dinner – Thursday 30 (optional)

Full program and details TBC

The National Olive Conference & Trade Exhibition is facilitated by the Australian Olive Association, 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 industry sponsors and exhibitors.

