



### Impact of COVID 19

Once more we head into lockdown, hopefully a short stint. For those on the farm, this may have very little impact, but for those in the urban environment, we offer our sincere best wishes and hope this outbreak is contained quickly. It does give us all a breather to consider the below issues a bit more deeply though.

WAOC is looking for nominations for 5 Board Directors. We have a few projects brewing and look forward to putting our resources to help build the olive industry in WA. We will always have need of Directors with an industry focussed drive. WAOC is about building opportunities and a sustainable industry.

WA is weathering the COVID storm better than most, it seems. We were not prepared for the demands for our products in 2020. We can be better positioned in 2021. This does need collaborative approaches that support everyone to be competitive rather than to encourage growers to compete with each other.

WA's environment, soils and weather patterns offer varied grove options for new and future developments in the olive industry. We have started to build a local connection within our own universities that will expand our professional knowledge and understanding of the science of growing olives.

Our industry is building a closer partnership with DPIRD. Remember the old Ag Dept that would have an advisor drop out to a farm and offer direct assistance. It won't happen in the current political environment, but we do have stronger supportive links.

Quality assurance of our products is a challenge. WAOC has been offering a means for growers to get direct, professional and valuable information to growers across Australia and increasingly, internationally, with our WA Olive Competition. Our feedback and award system are criterion referenced models with judges who have many years of experience, state wide, nationally and internationally. We will continue to offer this support.

As a state body, we offer the industry representation. Currently, one member is on the national board of AOA. We keep our links with Australia Post up to date in order that we get a discounted price on mailing olive products.

There are continued conversations about integrated pest and disease management issues and a need to be prepared for incursions such as *Xylella fastidiosa*.

We are finding an influx of new growers and energy in the WA olive industry. Is this COVID related? I have no idea, but it is happening. I am calling to everyone interested in growing olives, developing olive products – oil, table olives, cosmetics and culinary connections of all types, to join the WA Olive Council. Check the website for details [WWW.oliveswa.com.au](http://WWW.oliveswa.com.au) or give me a call or email. Feel free to pass this on.

## WAOC Board 2021

We have been increasingly involved in some very exciting developments over the past few years with pest management, innovative grove management, close links with tertiary institutions doing state-based research and a huge demand for bulk EVOO. Our Board members have all been in place now for two years and we need to run elections for five of these Director positions early in 2021.

Five Director positions will be declared vacant. Those Directors that have been on the Board for the greatest duration will stand down or offer themselves for re-election at the next AGM while the newer members will continue. We will apply this "senate type" election to maintain continuity and provide opportunities for new ideas and directions. Those stepping down and possibly for re-election will be Steve Milton, Isabelle Okis, Tanuja Sanders and Russell Lewis. Rick De San Miguel will also step down as he was seconded to the Board for an R&D role for 2020. A special thanks to all of them for their dedicated efforts for the olive industry.

Any member interested in registering their intent to stand for election as a Director is asked to send an expression of interest with a brief bio to [admin@oliveswa.com.au](mailto:admin@oliveswa.com.au) by 21 Feb 21.

The AGM will be in March 2021. Immediately following the election, the new board will elect its Chairperson/President for the next 12 months. If you wish to nominate, please do so by 21 Feb 2021.

## Call for EVOO Contract Support

Do you have any old EVOO? One of our members is looking for 600 litres for a cosmetic and soap contract. Can you help. Even small quantities will help. If so, please contact Malcolm Lee at [info@thirdpillar.com.au](mailto:info@thirdpillar.com.au)

One of the ways we can build this industry is through olive producers collaborating and assisting others to maintain their contracts. Non-members can access this support by paying \$175 and becoming a member. Several have done just this, but our support is minimal when producers go it alone.

## Marketing options

It strikes me that we were unprepared before COVID 19 and are going to remain so until we get a shared forum that offers collaboration amongst members and others involved in the wider aspects of the olive industry.

WAOC has offered a point of contact for buyers, international, national and local, seeking olive products. We have directed these to particular members who have quantities of good quality products surplus to their current contracts. Some of these buyers are our own members who have been enterprising and sold their own stock and need replenishing. This worked in 2020 but there were more requests than products available. Our members negotiated prices etc. with prospective buyers. WAOC merely acted as go between.

So, if you have quantities of quality EVOO or table olives surplus to current contracts, please let me know and this can continue for the coming months. A better process may be applied for the 2021 harvest and I am open to any suggestions that may serve you better.

## A partnership with Government

WAOC will co-sponsor a research project partnered with DPIRD aimed at identifying the dimensions of the WA olive industry. We need to get a better understanding of what is the composition of our industry. This leads us to many questions...how many trees makes a business? Is our industry dynamic? Is it regenerating after each sale of a grove? What is our capacity for expansion? What are the issues that we are facing? Are there solutions that appear to be working? What do we need to do to be more competitive? Where does WAOC need to look to ensure sustainability and future market options? Do we set our pricing based on the quality of our products or try to compete against frequently inferior imports?

## Government Supports Available to Industry

The below funding and subsidy opportunities are still current and may suit your needs.

1. You may have an idea for innovation or growth and need some funding support. Try this link.

<https://www.coles.com.au/about-coles/supporting-aussie-producers/coles-nurture-fund>

2. Airfreight costs subsidy up to 45% of COVID caused price rises

This is an ongoing grant that has been extended to Feb 2021. The grant is for up to 45% of the increased cost of freight, assumed due to COVID19 impact (i.e., average cost of freight/kg last year to this year). The grant is applied for by your freight forwarder or airfreight supplier, so you will need to discuss this with them. If you are interested, enter:

<https://www.grants.gov.au/Go/Show?GoUuid=a93c4de9-061c-b45a-2523-eee88a300b92>

3. Agrifood and Beverage Voucher Program:

See the link for details of the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of the Agrifood and beverage voucher program.

This is designed for those currently value-adding and wanting to expand, or those looking to transition into manufacturing to value-add. <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/AFBvoucherprogram>

If you are interested in more information, contact Alec McCarthy:  
alec.mccarthy@dpird.wa.gov.au