



WAOC News March 2020

Hello members,

We had our Board meeting mid-March, just ahead of COVID-19 limitations. The virus situation is terrible and we wish you all the best in the coming times, both personally and in your business and olive ventures. The Board considered the impacts as we knew them at the time and have developed a few options for us to be a support to our membership and potentially to the WA olive industry. We will keep close liaison with DPIRD as this situation develops and keep you informed along the way.

Yep. **COVID-19** got a fair amount of discussion, especially in regards to what WAOC will do this year and how it will support its members. One aspect is to really build up our online material, support and training which we will do by developing a “member’s only” area with material to aid in operational management of groves, storage, marketing, etc. Current thoughts include training packages for new growers. Many of our members are new to the industry having recently purchased existing olive groves or are starting out with new ventures.

I reckon **olive presses will have to establish workable practices** to ensure processing olive oil will not be impacted by government limitations. Will this result in harvesting more by machine as voluntary and short-term labour may not have the flexibility to move around and be employed in this year’s harvest?

We are looking at our **WA EVOO Competition** to see how we can still offer this to growers. I really don't see this as very difficult, as judging is normally done in isolation with consensus on criteria and judgements coming from facilitated discussion. This can be done by telephone or shouting through a wall (lolol). Current indications are that we won't have a dinner this year. I know many enjoyed them and valued the professional discourse surrounding the qualities of the season’s oils and the aspirations they have for their products. The criteria for judging and for awards will not change. Ellen Slobe has returned to administer the competition as our Steward. Her past experience will be greatly valued as we build on what we initiated in 2019. Best of luck to everyone and I hope we get more Golds this year.

Marketing is going to be a big issue for the smaller, boutique growers as local street markets may not be permitted depending on COVID-19 peaks and troughs. This does raise some golden opportunities though and we need to do some serious thinking about these possibilities over the next couple of weeks leading up to harvest time. We are investigating opportunities for local growers to put commercial quantities of high quality EVOO on supermarket shelves (I understand there is lots of space in some shelves at the moment).

We developed some innovative sponsorship deals last year that offered award winners with commercial quantities from the EVOO competition the opportunity to have exposure in wider markets. This doesn't take a huge mind to work out how growers can take advantage of these offers. Let's talk!!

We have a **science research project** being developed through our links with Murdoch University. Zora Singh will be supervising a PhD student researching the qualities of EVOO of particular varieties across the latitudes of WA. This will be the first of its kind in WA and could become a benchmark for future research into climate change effects. It could also provide another avenue of research into specific attributes of fruit that could support localities to develop their own Area of Origin Control (AOC) for marketing purposes. The Board is seeking information from members of the varieties they will be using in their pressing this year and also asking for 3 x bottles to be tested. Once we have this information, we will offer Zora the varieties that can be researched and then go to the growers to access their support. The results will be available to each grower and their support will be acknowledged in the research. If you are interested and willing to support this research, please call me or any member of the Board.

The **Board of WAOC** has very little change for 2020: Steve Milton – President - Chair; Tanuja Sanders – Vice President –Marketing; Ken Jeffrey – Treasurer; Taryn Port – Secretary/Business and Media management; Isabelle Okis – Head judge EVOO Competition; Thelma Burnett – Compliance; Barry Sander – Media and Promotion; Zora Singh – Tertiary Institutions and research; Russell Lewis – Executive committee member and; Alec McCarthy – link with DPIRD. We welcome Taryn and Alec as ex officio members of the Board who have no voting rights and look forwards to their involvement.

We still have a vacancy and would welcome anyone with a driving interest in building our industry. If you are that person. Please make the time to call me. 0488641099.

This newsletter is only going to current financial members. Feel free to share it with people you may know as they may have not yet renewed their membership. As we build the online members area, we will be looking at material to be useful and that will help growers innovate or advertise or debate issues of the industry. My feeling is that it is only for members and should be active. It may contain challenges. It may contain procedures that can help growers access support or readiness for a market. It will be yours so please let me know what you want it to do. Respond via my email address.

Good luck with your harvest and let me know where assistance may be needed in these trying times.

Steve Milton
President
WAOC
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