



Pickled & Pressed Autumn 2007

Hopefully you have all had some recent rain. Your dams are looking fuller and the creeks around you are running again.

In this issue you can read an article from Rosie Gardner about her frustrations with trying to deter the birds. Les Ridd has written a report on the activities of the Food Company and John Phillips talks about progress he has made on the marketing of Food Company products.

Hope to see you all on 21st April – please let Kaye know if you are coming and also if you have some of your products (oils, tapenades, table olives, soaps) we could include as a thank you to our speakers.

Owners of small processing units. Please Iain Towers know if you are willing and able to process small quantities of oil for our members know: 5790 3323
iaintowers@hotmail.com

There is an article from the Mar - April 2007 edition of Olivegrower and Processor that I have included as I felt would be of interest and cheer to all members.

Irene Laing

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President's Report



Rain at Last:

I hope you have had good rain over the last month or so; we have been lucky at Marraweeny with over 75 mm spread over the second half of March. It would be great if April continues this trend; our trees are already looking very happy and the grass is turning green again. So we are feeling good.

But we are also very aware that there are other people for whom the rain is just too late, with thin stock grazing the road downhill from us because there is nothing left in the paddocks. Maybe you can think about whether you have neighbours who are finding life tough.

AOA and VOC; Benalla Meeting:

The Australian Olive Association (AOA) has been working, for the last year, on how to build itself into an effective representative body for olive growers in Australia - which can gain support from the federal government. And the Victorian Olive Council (VOC) has agreed to become part of the new AOA structure.

As you know, the VOC is holding a meeting in Benalla on the 15th April to present the proposals. It would be great if you can get there and hear the story first hand and form your own view of the proposals as they may affect you and GSOGA. You can also see these things with fresh eyes; some of us who have been involved for a while can find it difficult to see past the shorter term difficulties to the possible real advantages in the longer term.

First GSOGA Seminar of 2007:

On the 21st April we have our first seminar of the year - focussed on Fertility, Pests and Pickling. You will have seen from the flyer that we have some really good speakers. And for the first time we have a major part of a seminar talking about pickling; here is an opportunity to

learn about pickling; maybe try it out on a small scale this year; and then consider making pickled fruit one of your products for sale.

Back from the Brink :

We have been reading "Back from the Brink" by Peter Andrews - about his ideas on managing fertility and water in Australia. He focusses on diversity of plant species, the value of mulching and the reworking of eroded watercourses. It is challenging stuff; counter-intuitive in many places; and lots of people will disagree with it. But I believe it is well worth reading. There is much in it which seems to me brilliant and helpful; and where I do not agree it forces me to think through why I believe I am right.

With best wishes for good autumn

Andrew



One for the Birds

– an e-mail I received from Rosie Gardner

I am afraid I don't have a lot to report except that for the first time since we bought this house we have had to net our "house olive trees" as the birds were just relentless.

We borrowed vineyard nets from a friend and have managed to cover most of the really heavily laden trees but there are a few out of reach and I can't do what I did for the last 4 days before we picked our first lot of Shiraz. We didn't have enough to warrant nets this year and as the baumé (sugar content in our Shiraz) went up so did the intensity of the friggin birds!! So 4 days I sat on the quad bike in my togs (as it was 40' plus and I had to keep falling into the pool) with an umbrella, drink and a book and a shot gun. I went through 2 boxes of ammunition and got a really sore shoulder and for all my trouble I only got one bird BUT I did warn him!!! Actually they are so smart they always fly just out of reach of the shot gun but on the last day I had had enough and I chased a bunch of birds into a tree by the dam and went BANG! It was so stressful I told Leon I couldn't do that ever again!

So I think once we have netted the vineyard we will use those nets for the olives. Makes life so much less stressful and we can go away for a few days and know the birds can't get them. The new grove of 40 trees (don't laugh!) is a bit drought stressed and copped a few hoppers in the hotter months and we have lost a few due to blocked drippers but hopefully we will see them grow into good fruiterers one day!

PS: Some creature has chewed through a part of the netting which I had mended and I can see some of the trees look a bit depleted. Why does it have to be a battle?????

Cheers Rosie



Organic corner – Green Lacewings for olive lace bugs

Most of the trees we planted last May have survived with just a bucketful of water each week since last November. A few didn't make it and so we will be planting some to replace them. Some of our trees are being attacked by olive lace bug so we got the Good Bug Book out and ordered some green lacewings. We have released one lot and the next batch go out tomorrow. Hopefully a combination of the recent rain, another kilo of Rooster Booster around each tree and the Green Lacewings will see things come right.

The green lacewing is one of the most common and widely distributed native lacewings in Australia. It is well suited to a wide variety of crops and habitats and is most active in warm climates. They are probably best suited to tree and shrub crops.

Adult green lacewings are green, with four clear wings. Adult female lacewings live for 3-4 weeks and lay up to 600 eggs. Each egg sits on the end of a slender stalk, which elevates it from the ground and decreases the chances of predation by ants. The eggs take approximately 4 days to hatch.

Larvae increase in size from 1 mm at first emergence up to 8 mm just before they pupate. They have small spines on their backs upon which they impale their prey. This provides a form of camouflage and allows the larvae to appear inconspicuous among the prey. Larvae of the green lacewing are wide-ranging predators that will attack and eat almost any small insects or eggs. They are particularly effective at controlling aphids and can consume 60 aphids in an hour. They also attack mealybugs, greenhouse whitefly, twospotted mite, thrips, small caterpillars, moth eggs and **olive lace bugs!**

We got our Green Lacewings from Bug Central (www.bugcentral.com.au). They are cannibalistic, so it is recommended they are released within 2 to 3 days after receipt. The packaging material keeps them separated, and food is supplied in the tubs to reduce cannibalistic activity prior to release. Ours were dispatched on a Monday. We received them on Tuesday and kept them in a cool place (18C to 24C) until we released them on Thursday.

To release the lacewings we distributed the contents of the punnets evenly amongst the foliage of the trees being targeted. As a guide the contents of each punnet was distributed amongst 5 trees. We released the bugs in the early evening, as they are less active at night and more likely to stay near the release site. They alternatively feed on nectar and pollen, especially in the adult stage, so the encouragement of flowering plants in the garden is critical for effective biological control of insect pests.

Insecticides can kill lacewings! Whilst some 'softer' chemicals may not be as disruptive to predators such as lacewings, many will cause major casualties amongst resident good bugs, as well as our introduced lacewings. Many fungicides can also disrupt natural enemies, and whilst detailed information is not available for all products on the market, it is better to avoid products that do not explicitly detail the effects they have on beneficials.

Irene Laing



31st March 07

FOOD COMPANY PURCHASE OF OLIVE OIL – SEASON 2007

In season 2006 the Company offered GSOGA growers a fixed price for their oil. This was based on anticipated continuation of the overseas sales of the previous season and an expectation a strong domestic demand for our oil. As thing turned out, the bulk export market failed to attract return orders despite the Company investing considerable effort and money in marketing it in the US. This combined with a domestic market price substantially less than 2005/06 has seen the Company having to make up the shortfall through sales of boutique products on the local market.

With export sales not presenting a viable option for bulk oil sales in the short term the Company must concentrate on domestic sales to ensure an adequate financial return to our growers as well as to secure the financial future of our Company.

With this in mind the Board has decided to restructure its price and conditions for the purchase of olive oil for season 2007. In summary it is proposed to offer growers a guaranteed minimum as a first payment and further payments as sales are generated. This system is consistent with other farm enterprises and will give the Board the flexibility to sell at market price without subjecting the Company to an unacceptable financial risk.

As we did last season the Board will pay Shareholders processing costs at Rich Glen and Cobram Estate. As the Company owns storage facility at Rich Glen, we would prefer processing to be done there. We will negotiate separately with non Shareholders re processing costs. The price negotiated applies to fruit delivered for sale by growers directed to the Company. The processed oil will be placed straight into the Company owned storage containers at Rich Glen. The transport cost of the fruit to the processor will be the grower's responsibility.

Quality Assurance

You will recall the Company quality requirements for Season 2006 and 2007 laid out in the April 6th 2006 letter, particularly the need for growers to have completed an approved supplier course such as Olive Care. Rich Glen will not accept fruit from growers who are unable to demonstrate approved supplier credentials. Growers are reminded of the need for completion of a desk top audit as part of this process before fruit for oil will be accepted by the Company. Please contact auditor David Camichael (97363227 mob 0411 700 846) for details.

We will provide further updates on Harvest 2007 as news becomes available. Good luck with the harvest.

With Kind Regards

The Board

GSOGA Food Company Pty Ltd

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Marketing Thoughts – John Phillips, GSOGA Food Co P/L

P & P: John, you've now been in this position for over 6 months, are you satisfied with your progress?

JP: It's been an interesting time sorting out what works and what doesn't. At first I was going through a period building relationships with existing customers and also establishing my own networks. I'm happy with that side of things so far. In terms of the business side of it, there's still plenty of work to do, but I'm very confident with the opportunities that we have at the moment. I've been involved in sales and marketing pretty much all my working life so I'm well aware of the requirements.

P & P: What are your main priorities at the moment?

JP: My immediate priority is to finalise a sale on our remaining stocks of oil at Rich Glen. I am constantly in contact with a number of people who have expressed serious interest and I'm hopeful that a sale is fairly close. With the 2007 harvest approaching, this is the obvious priority, but the other one that is also very important and ongoing is to build up our Wholesale business with sale of Oi product to retailers, particularly in the Melbourne metropolitan area and eventually into other states. I think it's vital that we continue strongly with this activity because it's this side of the business that can give us the profits that we sometimes need to offset the lower margins involved in bulk oil sales.

One of the reasons we committed to the Fine Foods Australia event in Melbourne last September was to develop a stronger network of Oi sales outlets and we are still benefiting from that. One particular organisation we met up with at FFA has an exciting vision for the olive industry in Australia and if they go with us, we could, over a period of time, see Oi Product in stores Australia wide, with potential for international sales. We're not quite there yet, but I can say that I've now had 3 meetings with the Principals and we are on a short list of possible suppliers.

They are highly enthused about our products, particularly the Tapenades and Marinated Olives. I should

also mention that they're Italians with a great knowledge of Olives, so we should take heart from that!

P & P: That's great to hear, but why can't we make more from the export market?

JP: We're not ignoring the export market by any means. The Food Co has a responsibility to explore all potential opportunities for the sale of olive products. The ultimate scenario, export wise for us would be to do direct business with an overseas customer. At present there are people in Australia who are constantly looking for bulk oil to send to China on a regular basis and that will always be an option for us, but with a middle man involved, the margins are small and the volume requirements are huge so it's not the ideal way for us to go. It may be better if we could find a more niche market customer, in the USA for example, perhaps just operating in California, given that it's a huge economy in its own right.

P & P: What happened to our previous U.S. customer?

JP: We're still in contact with them and still have product (under their label) in their stores and warehouse, but there was a bit of an over ordering situation in the initial stages which has left them with sufficient stock for the moment, but we are still hopeful of further orders and other opportunities with them in the future with new products, etc.

P & P: What about other opportunities for us here in Australia?

JP: I don't believe that we will achieve success in this industry if we put all our eggs in the one basket. We are in a position to be able to offer a range of items and services whether it be bulk oil, private labelling, packaged product, service to hospitality, etc, etc. We are currently talking with a supplier who has a new concept for an infusion product and wants to use our oil and processing facilities. It's early days but he's extremely keen, and all these things have to be followed up. Olives and related products can be aimed at a number of different market segments. That's why it's a very exciting industry to be involved with and it keeps you extremely busy.



Olive Oil tops the UK market

Extract of an article from March-April Olivergrower & Processor

Olive oil sales in the UK at the start of this year surpassed sales of standard varieties such as vegetable, sunflower and seed oils for the first time, according to the market analyst Mintel.

According to Mintel the olive oil market since 2000 has grown by 39% to break through the £100m (\$250m) mark.

In 2000 olive oils made up 43% of the liquid oils market value, with standard oils taking 52% and speciality oils accounting for the rest.

Today the olive oil sector is worth some £104 m and accounts for an estimated 51% of the total market.

It is believed that health concerns and also the aspirational value of Mediterranean cooking are to account for olive oil's increased market share.

According to Mintel, the number of consumers buying virgin or extra virgin oil has risen from 25% in 2003 to 30% last year, with those purchasing regular olive oil remaining stable at 44%.

Overall, Mintel says that the market for edible oils has increased 15% since 2002 to reach just under £220 m last year, with liquid oils taking some 94% of sales.

The remainder of the market is made up of solid fats, dominated by lard and it is this sector that is now really starting to feel the heat. Value here has melted away from £22m to just £14m since the start of the millennium, a decline of some 35%.



Fertility, Pests and Pickling Seminar
Saturday 21st April 10.00 – 3.30

Gooram CFA

Tom Rowe – Managing Director Hybrid Industries – Hybrid-Ag sells a range of biological and more ‘conventional’ plant nutrient products that are effective, environmentally safe and sustainable. Tom will be covering the following topics: # What is Biological Farming # What constitutes a healthy soil # Soil mineral balance # What is soil pH # Role of microorganisms in the soil # Understanding Photosynthesis # Overview

Peter Spurgin – Pesticide Officer APLC – Peter has been working with Green Guard since 1995 and will be coming to talk to us about locust and grasshopper control using Green Guard. Peter has sprayed the ‘little buggers’ on vines and forestry plantations. He is hoping he can get some useful feedback from those of us as who have been using Green Guard on our trees.

Jos Weemaes of Gooramadda Olives – Jos and his wife have 1000 trees. They have been awarded many prizes for their oils and olives. Jos processes his olives on site into extra virgin olive oil and table olives and sells his products via his cellar door. He will be talking about pickling olives - specifically #De-bittering processes #Preserving processes – pickling and non pickling #The economics #The food risks and control measures to avoid spoilage #The legal implications #HACCP and #GMP. Jos has a great website, I suggest you look at it before you come. <http://www.olivesandoil.info>

Cost \$5

This includes tea, coffee and lunch if RSVP by 17th April to:
Kaye Ashton: sweetlan@mcmmedia.com.au or Tel: 5790 4363