



AUSTRALIAN OLIVE
ASSOCIATION_{LTD}

AOA COVID-19 Bulletin for the Olive Industry

The impact of the Coronavirus or COVID-19 has certainly taken us into uncharted waters and is delivering new twists and turns every day. The AOA team, with help from our extended family in similar organisations across the country, is working hard to keep abreast of all that's happening, and working out what it means for our AOA members and the olive industry in general.

It's time like this when the importance of AOA membership and its links with peak industry organisations in horticulture and agriculture becomes evident. Communication directly with governments and authorities in an emergency is so much easier and effective when we are able to speak with one voice, and listen with one ear. Being able to discuss the impacts of COVID-19 on horticulture with governments has ensured agricultural workers were designated as "essential workers", and that border management protocols take account of the need to move people and machinery between states for harvest.

In this bulletin we provide some general COVID-19 information and some that's tailored specifically for the olive industry. There's information about labour and employment issues; interstate border protocols; postponed olive industry events; and an up-coming webinar technical program whilst in the grip of COVID-19.

Where applicable we've linked to information prepared by our industry colleagues to save reinventing the wheel.

Don't hesitate to send an email if you have a COVID-19 question you need answered and stay tuned for information about an online forum led by AOA President Mike Thomsett to discuss COVID-19 issues as a group.



COVID-19 Relevant General Links

[COVID-19 Government Updates](#)
[General Fact Sheets and Posters](#)
[Coronacast ABC Podcast](#)
[Information for Employers Fact Sheet](#)
[Hand Washing Video](#)

National COVID-19 Helpline

You can call the National Coronavirus Helpline for information and advice about COVID-19 on 1800 020 080. The line operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require translating or interpreting services, call 131 450.

Government Economic Response to COVID-19

The Government is providing a range of measures to address the global health crisis related to Coronavirus. Visit [The Treasury's webpage](#) for more information on the economic response to Coronavirus on 12 March 2020 and 22 March 2020, including fact sheets and an overview of the package.

[Support for households and individuals](#)
[Support for businesses](#)
[Support for immediate cash flow needs for SMEs](#)

General / Financial Support and Border Restrictions Government Links by State

Australians must avoid all non-essential domestic travel. States and territories can apply their own restrictions, including closing their state borders.

State	General COVID-19 information	Financial Support	Travel Restrictions
South Australia	SA General	SA Financial	SA Travel
New South Wales	NSW General	Helpline for	NSW Travel

Victoria	VIC General	Business Victoria hotline on 13 22 15	VIC Travel
Western Australia	WA General	WA Financial	WA Travel
Aust Capital Territory	ACT General	ACT Financial	ACT Travel
Tasmania	TAS General	TAS Financial	TAS Travel
Queensland	QLD General	QLD Financial	QLD Travel

Interstate Border Protocols

As well as visiting the government links listed in the table above, The National Farmers Federation is maintaining the latest information on border measures, including relevant paperwork, on [FarmHub](#).

Practical Steps to Minimise the Risk of COVID-19 Transmission

Checklist for Minimising the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace

Clients arriving with olives for processing should be treated the same as all visitors including providing a [Health & Travel Declaration Form](#) together with general rules for sanitation and social distancing:

- No visitors allowed on site within 14 days of returning from interstate or overseas travel
- All approved visitors to complete a [Health & Travel Declaration Form](#) prior to their visit.
- Any staff member, worker or visitor who appears visibly ill to be requested to leave immediately.
- Promote strictest hygiene among food preparation (canteen) staff and their close contacts.
- Promotion of good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene, and provision of hand sanitiser and hand wash stations for all staff and workers
- Regular cleaning and disinfecting of high touch surfaces.
- Stopping handshaking as a greeting.
- Keeping a distance of 1.5 metres between people whenever possible.
- Holding meetings via video conferencing or phone call.
- Taking lunch at desks or outside rather than in the lunchroom.
- Opening of windows and doors for more ventilation in the workplace.
- Limit food handling and sharing of food in the workplace.
- Defer all non-essential business travel.

Fresh Produce Safety

Dr. Hayriye Bozkurt is a postdoctoral research associate in the ARC Training Centre for Food Safety in the Fresh Produce Industry. Her advice regarding COVID-19 being passed on to fresh produce is as follows:

- COVID-19 is unlikely to be passed on through fresh produce.
- COVID-19 may survive up to three hours on dry inanimate surfaces, and several

hours on hands, tissues, and other surfaces, although this depends on the nature of the surface, environmental conditions etc.

- Reduce the risk of transmission by strictly following good personal hygiene practices along with good agricultural practices.

For more details visit <https://www.freshfoodsafety.org/news/2020/3/2/coronavirus-unlikely-to-be-passed-on-through-fresh-produce> and https://www.freshfoodsafety.org/news/2020/3/20/fresh-produce-safety-and-covid-19-positive-workers-in-processing-facilities-key-points-for-industry?mc_cid=1117bb72cb&mc_eid=d2100dedb6

The **NSW Food Authority** also echos this view:

Currently there is no evidence of foodborne transmission being a significant pathway. Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) provides further [advice](#) about this.

There are no direct food safety measures as a result of the novel coronavirus pandemic. Like SARS and MERS, COVID-19 is spread via person-to-person transmission (coughing, contaminated surfaces and fomites, and close contact with an infected individual). More information for businesses can be found on the [NSW Health website](#).

At a minimum, businesses must adhere to existing requirements of food laws, specifically:

- *Maintain and practice frequent hand washing when preparing foods, after going to the bathroom, and after touching the face or hair*
- *Maintain thorough cleaning and sanitising of facilities, equipment, and transport vehicles (including food contact surfaces and equipment, but also door handles, light switches, floors, walls, and other areas)*
- *Maintain strict requirements around worker health and hygiene. Any worker with a suspected communicable disease (such as coughing, sneezing, flu-like symptoms, gastrointestinal illness) **MUST** be excluded from the workplace.*

There are penalties under existing food legislation for businesses not complying with these requirements.

For more details visit: <https://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/help/covid-19-advice-for-businesses>

COVID-19 and the Impact on 2020 Olive Harvest Labour

Harvest is approaching for many producers who are fortunate enough to have crops to harvest. For many groves there is a well-established harvest structure utilising family and friends. However COVID-19 may impact on usual arrangements this year, so it's timely to be putting harvest contingency plans in place given the current movement restrictions and social distancing. Think about what you will do if there is a full lock-down. Are you able to accommodate harvest workers on your farm? How will you feed them? There's lots to think about.

If you usually source harvest labour from the general market, following is some general information about what's happening.

Access to Seasonal Workers

There may be an impact on the seasonal workforce due to COVID-19 as a result of domestic and international travel restrictions. Due to the new travel bans, no new "Seasonal Worker Program" workers will be able to enter the country.

No details have emerged yet regarding relaxing Seasonal Worker Program and Working Holiday Maker Program visa conditions to allow those workers who come to the end of their original visa be allowed to stay longer. Until such time, overseas workers are bound by their visa conditions which may limit their ability to work, even despite being in the country.

Other staffing options include retirees and those that have recently become unemployed, however, this may depend on health risk profiles and travel restrictions. Those recently

unemployed that are based in capital cities will need to be able to source accommodation in regional areas as well as leave their home and family – these factors may restrict the number of people actually available to take on harvest work. It will be up to individual growers to make sure they make it as attractive as possible for taking on the work.

Employment Resources

National Harvest Labour Information Service (NHLIS) has the experience and resources to help employers tap into available workers when needed. There are many potential workers looking for work accessing the NHLIS and the Harvest Trail website in search of possible employment opportunities. To list a vacancy on the Harvest Trail website, call 1800 062 332 between 8am and 8pm EDT Monday to Friday.

You can lodge vacancies directly onto www.jobsearch.gov.au which is used by all Jobactive providers as well as other employment program providers. Register your business on the Jobactive website to post your positions for free.

Consider using social media (eg. Facebook; Twitter) and traditional local advertising (eg. newspapers/community bulletin boards/roadside signs).

Contact a licensed Labour Hire service provider. Labour Hire providers can be found through a simple internet search such as Google.

Screening potential candidates for legal compliance and COVID-19

There have been reports in some areas of an abundance of seasonal backpackers looking for work, many entering farms unannounced. Some farmers are putting up signs on their farm gates asking those that are looking to work not to enter the property but to call instead and make an appointment. In addition to this, if you do not have one already, you can purchase a biosecurity sign for your farmgate [here](#).

Legal Compliance

As an employer, your very first obligation is to check personally that a potential backpacker employee has the right to work in Australia, and satisfy yourself as to how long that right will last. This means either an appropriate visa or evidence of Australian citizenship or residency and (in all cases) a tax file number.

A free way to check work entitlements of overseas backpackers is through the Department of Immigration and Border Protection's [Visa Entitlement Online Verification \(VEVO\)](#) tool. A number of helpful resources can be accessed from the department's [employing legal workers](#) web page.

The website of the [Fair Work Ombudsman](#) is a good source of information, and the [ATO website](#) is also useful. However, a good rule of thumb is to assume that overseas backpackers have the same rights as residents or citizens, unless there's a clear contrary provision. And document your decisions and the rationale for them.

Dealing with COVID-19

The Australian Government guidelines outlined in the COVID-19 Information for Border Staff Fact Sheet may be useful as it talks about dealing with travellers which may apply to backpackers. Download the factsheet [here](#).

Also consider updating your Workers Disclosure Form to include COVID-19 related questions. FreshCare® has created a useful template for this purpose. Download the template [here](#).

AOA Events Postponed Due to COVID-19



Unfortunately, the COVID-19 restrictions have meant the AOA has had to postpone a number of up-coming events. The sensory and OliveCare® workshop in Queensland won't go ahead as planned. Those that were booked to attend have instead been encouraged to sign up for TasteBook Rounds 6&7. Please contact Dr Soumi Paul Mukhopadhyay on 0409 283 581 or via email soumi.paul.mukhopadhyay@dpi.nsw.gov.au for more details. The Healthy Soils Field Days at all venues are also postponed but will proceed as soon as the COVID restrictions are lifted and it's safe to go back in the field The Processing Workshop at Boort has been postponed and will run again in April 2021.

We are hanging onto a thin thread of hope for the AOA AGM and the National Industry Conference scheduled for 15 October, and 16-18 October respectively. If we have to postpone both events due to COVID-19 then the AGM will be held ASAP post-COVID-19 to meet statutory regulations, and we will roll the conference to October 2021.

On a more positive note the AOA Board announced on Wednesday afternoon that the 2020 Australian International Olive Awards Competition will go ahead. The Board believed it was important for the commercial well-being of exhibitors that medals be available for producers' marketing programs.

AOA is currently working with Chief Steward Trudie Michels and Head Judge Shane Cummins to develop some innovative strategies using modern technology to enable a highly credible judging system to cope with COVID-19 restrictions. It will be a big job but we like challenges. We expect to be able to make a detailed announcement in May.

Here's an at-a-glance reference of what's happening and what's not:

Event	Planned Date	Postponed	New Date	Comments
TasteBook Sensory Workshop	4 April	YES	N/A	Those booked offered TasteBook® 6&7 participation
AOA Processing workshop – Boort, Vic	16-18 April	YES	April 2021	
Healthy Soils Field Day – Boort, Vic	19 April	YES	ASAP Post COVID-19	
Healthy Soils Field Day – Launceston Tas	3 May	YES	ASAP Post COVID-19	
Healthy Soils Field Day – Toowoomba, Qld	July	YES	ASAP Post COVID-19	
Healthy Soils Field Day – Cowaramup, WA	July	YES	ASAP Post COVID-19	
Healthy Soils Field Day – Wagga Wagga, NSW	August	YES	ASAP Post COVID-19	
Healthy Soils Field Day – Tooperang, SA	August	YES	ASAP Post COVID-19	
Australian International Olive Awards - Adelaide	16-19 September	NO	N/A	AIOA will go ahead with a modified judging format. Details in May.
AOA AGM	15 October	Not Yet	N/A	If postponed then ASAP Post COVID-19
National Olive Industry Conf – Devonport, Tas	16-18 October	Not Yet	N/A	If postponed then date will be 15-17 Oct 2021

Webinar Technical Productivity Program to Begin Late April 2020

With the postponement of the Field Day program, the AOA will be running a series of productivity technical webinars during the COVID-19 restriction period. All levy payers will be able to participate.

AOA will be developing the content packages over the next month with topics ranging from remote sensing to grove management, optimising product quality and export marketing. We are planning on some guest appearances from some international researchers working in Turkey and Spain. We will even be asking some of you to become internet stars and share some skills with your fellow producers.

A separate notice highlighting the details of each webinar and a login link will be sent for each event so watch your inbox after ANZAC Day.

Greg Seymour
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Olive Association

