



R&D Insights contains the latest levy-funded R&D project updates, research findings and related industry resources, which all happen under the Hort Innovation Olive Fund.

Hort Innovation partners with leading service providers to complete a range of R&D projects to ensure the long-term sustainability and profitability of the olive industry.

Conference provides practical knowledge to boost productivity, profitability

It's the winning combination that every olive producer is aiming for in their business: productivity and profitability. And they go together – increase one and you achieve the other. But for most producers, the question is how?

This year's AOA National Olive Conference & Exhibition aims to provide the answer, by sharing the building blocks of knowledge that producers can use to improve their growing and production practices, and their olive businesses.

Comprehensive program

There's a lot involved in growing and producing olive products, so the plenary program covers a wide range of topics, all relevant, timely and presented by experts in their respective fields. Here's a selection, which will convince any procrastinator that you really do need to be there!

Market Insight

Recognising the global marketplace we operate in, Day 1 kicks off with an overview of developments in the US olive

industry, presented by AOA Director and international industry consultant Paul Miller. Covering quality and production issues from a global perspective, it's an ideal lead into the invaluable consumer market update provided each year by fellow AOA Director Andrew Burgess. As Business Development Manager at Australia's largest olive oil producer, Cobram Estate Olives, Burgess has his hands on the latest figures and years of market insight to share.

Deep dive into water

The focus then moves firmly onto water, increasingly one of the biggest challenges for olive producers across the globe.

Peter Hayman from SARDI, DPI leads off, providing insight into forecasting drought – a tough job and one we all benefit from. Tom Hatcher from Swan Systems then moves straight into the practical side of the topic, starting with a look at the latest equipment and irrigation systems available for Australian olive groves.



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Olive Wellness Institute - Exhibitor
Science repository on nutrition, health and wellness benefits of olive products

He'll cover the oft-asked question: "How do I know how much water my olives need, and when?", and provide a case study on water management systems using real grove data.

While most growers are way past the manually-operated sprayer systems of old, Tom's presentation will no doubt introduce many to the opportunities for smarter, more sustainable and more cost-efficient water usage presented by the latest technology.

International expertise

Further fleshing out sustainable water use, Professor Arnon Dag will share his expertise around irrigating olives with reclaimed wastewater. Senior Researcher at the Department of Fruit Tree Sciences, Institute of Plant Sciences of the Agricultural Research Organization, Israel, Professor Dag's research specialty is pomology under semi-arid conditions. Olive biology and cultivation are a focus area, particularly the relationship between tree, soil and water.

In an eight-year term field experiment, Professor Dag's research team evaluated irrigation and nutrient management of olives with reclaimed wastewater (RWW) versus fresh water (FW), and with standard or reduced fertilization. The results for RWW irrigation were positive in terms of nutrition and fruit yield, with no effect noted on oil composition, chemical quality parameters and organoleptic characteristics.

If you've got wastewater and either high water bills or no irrigation water (which covers pretty much all of us), this is one presentation you don't want to miss.

Optimising fertilisation

On Day 2 Professor Dag will also speak on the importance of optimising macro-elements in fertilising olives, another focus area of his research.

He will share the results of an evaluation of the effect of nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus fertilisation on olive tree physiology and olive oil quantity and quality, in both controlled container and field experiments. Discussion will include the fundamental role of nitrogen to the successful management of intensive olive orchards, and the importance of phosphorus for productivity and potassium for tree functioning.

Spotlight on table olives

The rapidly growing market for table olives has seen increased interest in local production in recent years, so this year's Conference program is putting table olives front and centre - and then in your mouth.

University of South Australia Professor John Fielke will introduce *Olives the Australian Way™*, a new scalable production process developed by a team of local researchers and industry experts. The method creates a new style of table olive which uses less resources - particularly water - and are market-ready in a quicker time. And apparently they taste sensational!

Professor Fielke - who is also a major award-winner at the Australian International Olive Awards (AIOA) in recent years - will share the steps in creating this new style of table olive, and discuss the opportunities the method presents for the Australian industry.

The optional Field Day also covers many of the grove management topics in the plenary program.





Eclipse Enterprises – Exhibitor
Electric harvesting and pruning equipment for olive groves



Swan Systems - Exhibitor
Tailored, data-based irrigation and nutrient management systems



Sicma Harvesters South Australia – Exhibitor

Sales, service and parts for Sicma srl harvesting machines



FELCO Australia - Exhibitor
Pruning shears and cutting tools for commercial use



Table Olive Producers of Victoria; Australian Olive Services - Exhibitor

Table olive production and supply services; Pruning, harvesting and processing services



Unity Scientific - Exhibitor
NIR and CdR oil analysers to optimise harvest timing



Bayer - Exhibitor
Crop protection solutions and digital farming



Mount Torrens Holdings - Exhibitor
OMT S.p.a olive oil processing plant equipment



Marksmen Smart Pumps - Exhibitor
Scaleable liquid handling solutions

He'll then be joined by AIOA Table Olive Head Judge Dr Michelle Wirthensohn for a tasting of the 2024 'Australian Way' table olives, including comparison tastings of 'regular' processed table olives.

Adding product evaluation skills to the information mix, this is another 'must-attend' session for anyone thinking about expanding your offering to include table olives.

And so much more

We've only covered part of the program here, with other presentation topics including composting, olive agrichemicals, varietal suitability, benchmarking and harvest timing. There's also the panel session *What machinery do I really need?*, looking at the big picture of owning vs contracting big-ticket capital items. Discussion will include considerations like scale, convenience and availability, and justifying the costs of equipment ownership. It's an incredibly relevant session for smaller growers in particular but a conundrum every producer will no doubt have grappled with at some stage.

Discussion and questions

For those who haven't attended an AOA Conference before, another important element of the program is the round-up period at the end of each session. With presenters on hand to answer questions from attendees, it's a chance to clarify information in the context of your own operation, discuss alternate points of view, and share experiences around the topics with your peers.

We call that information gold!

Book now

Registrations are now open, with tickets for both the Conference and optional events available [here](#).

The AOA has also organised a special delegate rate for rooms at the venue, and you can secure your accommodation at the discounted rate by booking directly [here](#).



2025 National Olive Conference & Exhibition Details

Where: Hotel Grand Chancellor, Adelaide, SA

When: Tuesday 28 October (optional Field Day), Wednesday 29 and Thursday, 30 October

The program will include:

- Field tour (optional) - Tuesday 28
- Plenary sessions - Wednesday 29 & Thursday 30
- Industry Trade Exhibition - Wednesday 29 & Thursday 30
- Conference Dinner – Wednesday 29
- 2025 Australian International Olive Awards Presentation Dinner – Thursday 30 (optional)

The full program is available on the Conference website [here](#). Please note that final speaker and presentation details are updated as they are confirmed.

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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

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Accelerating productivity growth requires targeted action in four key areas:



Building capability in production cost analysis



Harnessing AI-insights



Automating data collection



Embracing mechanisation and automation

Report identifies drivers for future productivity growth

A new report from Hort Innovation and The Centre for International Economics (CIE) reveals that adoption of productivity-enhancing innovations in the horticulture industry could generate up to an additional \$1 billion in value added* annually.

Produced as part of the research project *Factors Driving Horticulture Productivity* (HA24004), the *Factors Driving Horticulture Productivity Technical Report* was created to provide an understanding of the underlying drivers of productivity, and an economic modelling framework to quantify each of those drivers. This enables the industry itself to better understand and analyse the relative importance of different drivers, and take action accordingly.

Opportunities and challenges

Hort Innovation CEO Brett Fifield said the Australian horticulture industry is at a critical juncture and that productivity increases are the key to ensuring future growth. The report recognises that while there are new opportunities, there are also challenges in both domestic and global markets.

“Sustained productivity growth is essential for lifting profitability and ensuring competitiveness within the Australian horticulture sector,” he said.

“The industry continues to face ongoing challenges such as labour costs and shortages, so we wanted to examine what information and recommendations we could unearth to help support growers in becoming more productive.

“This report looks at what can change on farms to support our industry with the productivity shift. From simple things such as better data collection, to bringing more automation onto farms, there are opportunities for every grower, no matter the size of their business.”

Key action areas

The report identifies that targeted action is required across four key areas of innovation to further accelerate horticultural growth:

1. **Production cost analysis:**

Building the skills and capability to understand cost drivers and profitability. This allows enterprises to modify operations and discontinue unproductive activities or practices.

2. **Automating data collection:**

Using digital technologies to support real-time management decisions. This involves capturing, processing and operationalising data and information, to inform farm practices and enable more data-driven farm management.

3. **Harnessing machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI):**

Using advanced analytics to support better decision-making. ML and AI enable enterprises to interrogate data, uncover patterns, and understand the detailed dynamics of enterprise performance. This opens up new possibilities for agronomic and related practices.

4. **Embracing mechanisation and automation:**

Applying physical automation in farm-based production (e.g. picking and spraying), packing and transport. While this overlaps with data collection and AI, this group focuses on the physical implementation and other forms of automated interaction with the relevant crop.

Using these key drivers, it models three innovation adoption scenarios, reporting the effect of the productivity changes.

The simulations shows that the difference between faster and slower adoption of productivity-enhancing innovations could mean as much as \$37 billion (in present value terms) for the horticulture industry.

*Explainer: value added vs GVP

The *Factors Driving Horticulture Productivity* report uses value added (VA) to measure the impact of productivity, rather than gross value of production (GVP), as it provides a clearer picture of the actual benefits producers derive from productivity improvements.

GVP is the total market value of all products sold and includes all sales revenue, including payments to input suppliers, while VA isolates those external costs and captures what is retained by industry - wages, returns to landowners and profits.

Olive industry input

The olive industry had direct representation in the productivity report project via input from South Australian producer Harrison Rowntree, part of the Longridge Olives team.

"At the project's inception, we sought insights from over 90 horticulture growers across Australia, including Harrison," Hort Innovation Head of Industry Insights Lucy Noble said.

"The aim was to understand the considerations of Australian growers when it comes to tracking productivity gains and optimising profitability.

"Harrison participated in these initial discussions with the Centre for International Economics and provided valuable insights that helped guide our approach to modelling future productivity scenarios for the sector out to 2040."

Grower modelling tool

The report is accompanied by an excel spreadsheet tool that growers and stakeholders can use to help model their own scenarios and adoption rates. The model provides analysis options for 42 individual horticulture growing industries and six processing sectors, including olives and olive oil.

Providing simplified implementation of the full project modelling framework, users can input key assumptions and the spreadsheet will calculate the implied values of industry VA resulting from those assumptions.

Experimental analysis

The tool allows users to experiment with different productivity drivers and can be used to:

- develop scenarios for future planning of industry VA based on assumptions about the uptake of productivity improving technologies;
- compare the implications of different productivity developments over time;
- test the effect of changes in underlying adoption drivers;
- assess the incremental effects of improved adoption outcomes;
- analyse the sort of productivity assumptions that would be needed to achieve 'targets' for growth.

The core idea underlying the modelling is that improvements in productivity arise through the adoption of new technologies and innovations that over time provide net returns to growers. Adoption itself is determined by a range of drivers which are captured in the model. By modifying these drivers, different productivity pathways can be simulated.

More information

View the full *Factors Driving Horticulture Productivity* Report [here](#). You can also find out more about the research project *Factors Driving Horticulture Productivity* (HA24004) [here](#), and the companion project *Economic contribution of Australian horticulture* (MT21010) [here](#).

Research recap

PROJECT NAME: *Factors Driving Horticulture Productivity* (HA24004)

PROJECT AIM: To enhance the horticulture industry's understanding of productivity opportunities and challenges by providing practical tools for ongoing analysis.

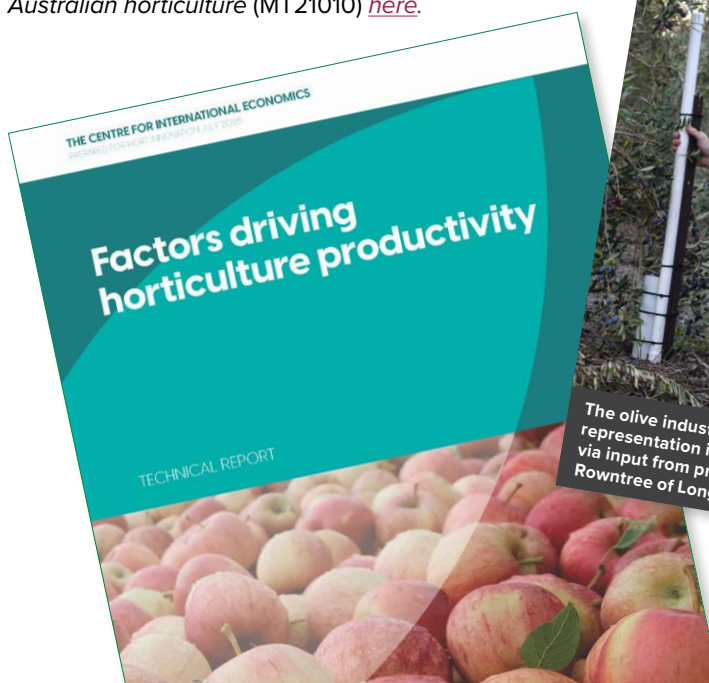
RESEARCH PROVIDER: Centre for International Economics

FUNDING: This whole-of-horticulture project is funded by the Hort Innovation Board Strategic Fund

PROJECT TERM: Ongoing

KEY INFORMATION:

- The report provides an understanding of the underlying drivers of productivity and provides an economic modelling framework to quantify each of those drivers.
- This will allow the industry to better understand and analyse the relative importance of different drivers, enabling more informed decision-making.
- The report was designed as a companion to the economic modelling research developed under the project *Economic Contribution of Australian Horticulture* (MT21010)



The olive industry had direct representation in the report project via input from producer Harrison Rowntree of Longridge Olives.

Getting Your Labels Right WEBINAR



AOA webinar steps out labelling requirements

With the new season's oils now racked and ready, most producers are in the midst of packaging. And along with the decisions around bottle, tin or bag-in-box, pourers - or not - and caps, many are struggling with what information to include on their labels.

AOA CEO and OliveCare® Administrator Michael Southan said it's imperative that producers get their labels right but for many, the process can be confusing.

"The AOA regularly receives enquiries about what must be included on a label, both from new producers who are not sure of the requirements, and also from long-standing producers trying to keep up with the evolving regulations," he said.

"So we ran a free webinar as an industry refresher on the topic, to provide the information needed to ensure that Australian olive product labels are compliant with all of the regulations and laws that must to be adhered to. And importantly, we covered not just the mandatory inclusions but also what you can't put on a label."

Topics covered

Here's an overview of the requirements Southan covered in the webinar, with extended detail on the crucial topics of **best before date** and **health and nutrition claims**.

Australian Consumer Law – 'truth in labelling'

All representations made about food are subject to fair trading laws and food laws operating in Australia and New Zealand, which prohibit false, misleading or deceptive representations.

These 'truth in labelling' regulations cover:

- accuracy of name and/or description;

- accuracy of weight and measure information;
- legibility – type size, prominence and language.

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) - mandatory information

ANZ Food Standards Code 1.2 covers the requirements to have labels or otherwise provide information. In short, if a food for retail sale is in a package it must have a label (*unless covered by a set of specific exemptions).

The information required on the label is comprehensive and includes both production and producer/supplier details, along with advisory statements (warnings and declarations), storage information, ingredients and nutrition information. Particularly important for olive oil producers are the requirements around nutrition and health claims.

Where food for sale is not required to bear a label, the information must accompany the food or be displayed in connection with the display of the food, or provided to the purchaser on request.

"But if you're selling olive oil or olives to a caterer, for example, it's in a package so it's no different to a bottle for retail. It needs a label," Southan pointed out.

Nutrition Information Panel

The Food Standards Code mandates that a Nutrition Information Panel (NIP) be provided on the label of any packaged food. The panel must be in a specific format and contain a set of mandatory elements.

"Relevant to us, there's also a voluntary declaration of fatty acids in edible oils and edible oil spreads, and a requirement to include the fatty acid breakdown where a claim in relation to the poly- or monounsaturated fat content," Southan said.

"So you could include, for our oils, the proportion of polyunsaturated, monounsaturated, and saturated fat - because there's really nothing else in the bottle."

NUTRITION INFORMATION		
SERVINGS PER PACKAGE: 50 SERVING SIZE: 15mL		
AVG QTY.	PER 15mL	PER 100mL
ENERGY	517 kJ	3446 kJ
FAT, TOTAL	13.7g	91.5g
SATURATED	2.1g	13.9g
MONOUNSATURATED	10.2g	68.3g
POLYUNSATURATED	1.4g	9.3g
TRANS	0g	0g
PROTEIN	0g	0g
CARBOHYDRATE	0g	0g
SUGAR	0g	0g
SODIUM	0mg	0mg
CHOLESTEROL	0mg	0mg
ANTIOXIDANTS		
VITAMIN E (30% RDI)	3mg	23mg
TOTAL BIOPHENOLS	5mg	33mg
SQUALENE	71mg	473mg
INGREDIENTS: 100% Australian Extra Virgin Olive Oil.		
Fatty acid breakdown is a voluntary addition to the Nutrition Information Panel for edible oil products.		

Best before date

ANZ Food Standards Code 1.2.5 - *Date marking of food for sale* – really ramps up the relevance for olive oil products with the all-important requirement of a **best before date (BBD)**.

Under the Code, the ‘best-before date, for a food for sale, means the date up to which the food for sale will remain fully marketable and will retain any specific qualities for which express or implied claims have been made, if the food for sale remains in its intact package during its storage’.

“For good practice, you should always have a best before date. And you can’t have a best before date on extra virgin olive oil which is longer than two years,” Southan said.

“The big question for our industry is: if the product is claiming to be extra virgin olive oil, how do we know what the best before date is? How do we substantiate it?”

Australian Standard for Olive Oil

Southan answered that question later in the webinar, discussing the chemical parameters for olive oil under the *Australian Standard for Olive Oils and Olive Pomace Oils, AS 5264-2011*.

“For BBDs, Pyropheophytins (PPPs) and 1,2 Diacylglycerides (DAGs) are particularly important, yet very few people currently have their oil tested for those two components,” Southan said.

“But everyone should be doing it. The only way you’re going to get a true indication of the BBD is to have PPPs, DAGs and an induction time test done, then use that data to accurately calculate the potential shelf life of your product. That gives you hard evidence to substantiate your BBD.”

The proof is in the data

Southan described a scenario where the hard data could protect a brand’s reputation.

“To just put two years on your label could cause you some problems,” he said.

“For example, if someone has bought your product and 18 months later finds it’s not the quality it says on the label - say it’s gone rancid - yet they say they’ve kept it as it’s

supposed to be kept. It’s going to be very hard to substantiate that your BBD is correct if you don’t have that information.

“But if you’ve had those tests done, the data proves your BBD is correct and there is some other factor involved. Most likely that’s going to be storage-related, but there can be no question that you’ve stated a false best before date.



Certification logo

“OliveCare® members can also use PPPs, DAGs and induction time testing to have their product Certified and use the Certification logo on that label, their website and promotional material. It provides consumers with easy identification of outstanding product quality and is another reason why everyone should become OliveCare® signatories.”



The webinar was presented by AOA CEO and OliveCare® Administrator Michael Southan.

Nutrition and health claims

Another ‘hot topic’ covered was ANZ Food Standards Code 1.2.7 - *Nutrition, health and related claims*.

“This part of the Food Standards Code is very prescriptive, it’s complex and you need to take a lot of care before you make any claims at all. That said, when you read it carefully, it’s pretty clear what you can and can’t say.

“The latter is especially crucial: you actually can’t make any claims unless you can find the exact claim already listed in the Code. That’s very important.

“Basically, claims can’t be therapeutic in nature and nutrition content claims can only be made about properties of food in Schedule 4 of the Code. And there’s really not a lot there that we can put on our labels for EVOO. Health claims must comply with very strict criteria too.

“So while we know EVOO is a really healthy product, if you want to go down that road on your labels you really need to look very carefully at those claims and seek independent professional advice.”

Australian Consumer Law – ‘Substantiation of product claims’

Compliance with Australian Consumer Law also includes the substantiation of product claims including product quality, provenance and certification, and requirements around food safety.

“So if you’re saying you’re organic, for example, you have to be able to substantiate that with all of the paperwork around your inputs and production specifications,” Southan said.

“Best before dates come into that as well, and for us, there are requirements around food safety.

“That includes table olives, where there are additional requirements in terms of the need for biological testing to ensure your food is safe. In the case of a food contamination issue, you’ve got to be able to show that you have all the checks and balances in place, and have met the legal requirements as a food producer.”

Fair Trading Provisions

All food producers are required to observe good production and marketing activities, and not engage in misleading or deceptive practices.

“The most relevant example here is that you can’t call an olive oil ‘EVOO’ and label it as one if you don’t know it is EVOO quality and can’t substantiate that quality,” Southan said.

“And even if you’ve got a major trophy winner, and you may want to say that it’s ‘the best oil on

the market', you can't say that. Technically you'd have to have every competing oil tested alongside it to substantiate a claim like that.

"In the past, several Australian olive producers and importers have been involved in high profile ACCC actions involving false and misleading conduct, that's why it's really important to get your labels right," Southan said.

"If you make a mistake, there's no protection."

AOA guides and resources

Southan pointed attendees to a number of resources created by the AOA to assist olive producers in meeting labelling regulations.

"Our previous *OliveCare*® Administrator, Peter MacFarlane, put a set of industry labelling guidelines together for EVOO, Flavoured Oils and Table Olives," he said.

"He made it really easy: the things in red are mandatory, the things with red Xs you can't have, the things in green are optional. It's a really good starting point to make sure you cover everything.

"And for *OliveCare*® members, there's also the *OliveCare*® Product Packaging, Labelling and Distribution Best Practice checklist. It's a comprehensive work-through process to check that you've done everything you need to do to meet your obligations around labelling."

Q&A session

The session finished with an enthusiastic Q&A session, with topics covered including:

- use of 'Cold pressed' on labels;
- labelling specifications for retail bulk EVOO (IBC);
- processing declarations for table olives;
- allergen information and advisory warnings;
- 'bold' listings;
- sourcing Nutrition Information Panel information;
- 'seasonal variations' on EVOO labels;



The AOA product labelling guides for EVOO, Flavoured Olive Oil and Table Olive products are available for download from the [AOA website](https://www.aoliveoil.org.au).

- calculation method of BEST BEFORE DATE for table olives;
- providence/production location;
- QR codes;
- Country of Origin logo;
- EVOO classification under Australian Standards;
- information regulations and websites/social media.

Southan said the range and complexity of the questions asked reflects the strong commitment by Australian producers to 'get their labels right'.

"It shows that people want to ensure they comply with the law when it comes to labelling - that they know what to do and then do it correctly," he said.

"There were some very sophisticated questions asked which were beyond my ability to answer but other attendees had experience with those elements which they shared. We also had a labelling expert on hand, so between us were able to provide answers to all of the questions asked."

Active response

Southan said feedback on the webinar had been very positive but its true value has been proven by the action it has generated.

"The biggest risk I see with labelling is the requirement for a best before date," he said.

"I wanted to highlight that you have to be able to substantiate that date and since the webinar I've seen more people having the tests to do that done. That's the best feedback we could get."

Webinar recording and more information

There's additional detail on the relevant labelling requirements for olive products - and the answers to all of the questions above - in the recording of the *Getting Your Labels Right* webinar, accessible [here](https://www.aoliveoil.org.au).

A PDF copy of the presentation slides is available [here](https://www.aoliveoil.org.au).

There's also more labelling information available in the Resources Library of the AOA website [here](https://www.aoliveoil.org.au).

Note: the recording can also be found in the Resources Library, or in the general resources section under '[Webinars](https://www.aoliveoil.org.au)'.

This webinar is part of the Olive levy project *Australian olive industry communications and extension program* (OL22000), funded by Hort Innovation, using the Hort Innovation olive research and development levy, co-investment from the Australian Olive Association and contributions from the Australian Government.