

ORGANIC OLIVE GROWING IN GREECE

GENERAL INFORMATION

As it is for many countries overlooking the Mediterranean, olive growing in Greece has a long – going back thousand of years – tradition (rich in highly historic contents). The capital of Greece, Αθήνα – Athens, owes its name to the goddess Αθηνά–Athena, the Romans Minerva, who the old inhabitants of Attica thanked giving her an olive tree.

One of the many descendants of that sacred tree is the so called “Olive of Plato”, which, according to tradition, was more than 2300 years old. It was to be found in the botanical gardens of the Faculty of Agriculture Science of Athens where it died in 1980.

Nowadays the areas of olive’s propagation are the Mediterranean countries, the western coasts of the African continent, South Africa and South Australia. In Greece the regions with high quality produce are: the isle of Crete, the Peloponnese, the Ionian and Aegean Islands.

The area set to olive growing is of 740 thousands hectares, of whom:

- 290 thousands hectares, 39% are on flat land
- 275 thousand hectares, 36% are on hills
- 180 thousand hectares, 24% are on mountains

The overall number of trees is 143 millions.

The total produce is: 1,640,000 quintals of table olives and nearly 20 millions of oil olives giving more than 4 millions quintals of oil.

The regions with the greater oil production are: the Peloponnese (43%) and the isle of Crete (31%), Lesbos (5.5%), Corfu and Zante (7%). The greater crops of table olives are to be found in 2 provinces of central Greece (55%), in the Peloponnese (16%) and in the province of Salonicco (15%).

The organic olive growing is also the most followed in the regions with a high olive related vocation (Peloponnese, Crete, Lesbos, Corfu and in 3 provinces of central Greece). It starts officially in 1993 with few hectares and today more than 70% of the area is absolutely organic.

YEAR	AREAS (ha)
1994	600
1996	3.500
1998	10.000
1999	12.000
2000	15.000
2001	15.500

CULTIVATION TECHNIQUES IN ORGANIC OLIVE GROWING

- The Soil

Practices in use to maintain and improve the soil fertility and, at the same time, to supply tree nutritional requirements are:

- Every 2 years: in autumn vetch seeding, plus a cereal (usually barley) and subsequent planting in spring. That is, we use green composts (barley seeds quantity: 20 – 30 Kg/ha.).
- In autumn filling with mature compost of sheep or goat. From 20-25 lt according to the tree development.
- Use of spring pruning remains with the aid of sarmant cutters.
- Recourse to mineral composts is fairly moderate. Composts containing potassium and boron are usually used.

- Weeds control

Winter weeds are controlled by ordinary soil processing in spring. Sarmant cutters, the plough, the weeding hoe and the milling cutter are the tools more used. More problematic is the control of weeds in high mountain and high hill lands where the use of the tractor is more difficult. In these cases we use a hedge trimmer, leaving weeds on site. In some cases, grazing is used as method of control.

- Irrigation

About the 30% of the olive groves are irrigated by means of a dripping irrigation system. A large part of these olive groves are in the flat lands of the Peloponnese and the isle of Crete.

PESTS DAMAGES

1) Insects

Insects who damage olives are divided in 2 categories:

- a Insects of major economic relevance
 - i) Olive fly (*Bactocera olea*)
 - ii) Mediterranean black scale (*Saissetia oleae*)
 - iii) Weevil (*Otiorynchus cribricollis*)
 - iv) Olive moth (*Prays oleae*)
- b Insects of secondary economic relevance
 - i) Pholetribus scarabeidos– hylesinus oleiperda
 - ii) Olive moth (*Piralide*)
 - iii) Scales: *Pollinia*, cotton root rot

2) Mites

Aceria oleae

DISEASES PROVOKED BY FUNGI AND BACTERIA

1) Fungi

- a Sooty mould (*Capnodium elaephilum*)
- b Peacock spot (*Cycloconium oleaginea*)

2) Bacteria

- a Olive knot (*Pseudomonas savastanoi*)

PHYTOSANITARY PROTECTION – INSECTS CONTROL

- ❖ Olive fly (5 – 8 generations a year from may till December)
 - ECOTRAP traps
 - Delta traps with bait, smeared with glue
 - Bottles of different shapes and colours filled with water and a bait
- ❖ Scales and sooty mould

- Correct pruning guarantees an adequate control of insects and of sooty mould development.

In case of a serious problem we can use cupric products against sooty mould and white oils against cochineal.

- Weevil

Glue rings making at trunk and branches.

- Olive moth

Fight to the first generation only for table cultivars.

- Use of pheromone traps
- *Bacillus thuringiensis* at the beginning of blossoming

- *Aceria oleae*

- Regulate irrigation
- Wettable sulphur

- Peacock spot

- Correct pruning
- Cupric products treatments

- Olive knot

Immediately after pruning use cupric products.

HARVESTING

- Table cultivars: manually
- Table and oil cultivars: spontaneous drop on plastic nets
- Oil cultivars: manually with the aid of electric

OIL MAKING

Water temperature lower than 30° C.

PRODUCT STORAGE

In stainless steel containers.

MARKETING

- In big supermarkets – specialised shops
- Direct marketing to consumers
- Export