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California Olive Oil Council Forecasts Record-Breaking Production of Extra Virgin Olive Oil for 2015-16, Topping 4 Million Gallons

Organization's Seal Certification Program shifting year designation to more accurately ensure harvest and production date

Berkeley, Calif., DATE – The California Olive Oil Council (COOC) is estimating a record-breaking production of 4 million gallons of California extra virgin olive oil for the 2015 harvest, eclipsing 2014's production of 2.4 million gallons. The increase marks an unprecedented year of growth for the state's burgeoning olive oil industry, which continues to increase annual production.

As of January 2015, there are more than 35,000 acres of olives planted in California for the production of extra virgin olive oil with over 400 growers/producers in the state. The COOC estimates that 3,500 new acres will be planted each year in California through 2020. Over 75 olive varieties are grown in the state for olive oil production resulting in proprietary blends unique to California.

"We're very pleased to anticipate such a productive harvest this year among California-based growers and producers," said Patricia Darragh, Executive Director of the COOC. "Fortunately, olives are a drought-resistant crop and not adversely affected by our state's water conditions, allowing us to meet increasing domestic and international demand for certified extra virgin olive oil."

COOC Adjusting Seal Certification to More Accurately Reflect Harvest

Established in 1998, the COOC offers a Seal Certification Program that promotes the highest standards in the world. To gain certification, oils are evaluated according to both chemical and sensory criteria. Only oils that meet the strict requirements are certified for use of the COOC Seal on their product. Under last year's program, the COOC certified almost 300 oils and estimates well over that number for 2015.

In an effort to ensure clarity for consumers and retailers, the COOC is changing its policy for the year denomination embedded in the Seal. Moving forward, the dated seal will reflect the harvest year rather than the certification year. Therefore, starting with this upcoming harvest, the dated seal will state 2015. In the past, the seal has reflected the certification year, which is typically the year following a harvest when an oil is released into the marketplace.

This change will result in a duplicate year for 2015. In order to avoid confusion during this transitional year, the 2015 seal for this harvest will use a gray and yellow color combination. In 2016, the seal will revert back to its original green and yellow color combination.

“We are committed to upholding the highest standards within the olive oil industry through our Seal Certification Program,” said Darragh. “Changing our year designation offers clearer information to retailers and consumers seeking the finest extra virgin olive oils from California.”

About the COOC

The COOC is a trade association with the mission of encouraging the consumption of certified California extra virgin olive oil through education, outreach and communications. The COOC is committed to upholding the highest standards within the olive oil industry through its Seal Certification Program. The COOC has over 400 members including growers and producers, service providers, retailers and other supporters of the California olive oil industry. The COOC represents over 90% of all olive oil production in California.