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## **California Olive Oil Council Marks 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as Industry Leader**

### ***Record Breaking Growth Mirrors Consumer Demand for Certified California Extra Virgin Oil***

**Berkeley, Calif., January 17, 2017-** The California Olive Oil Council (COOC) is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary since its founding in 1992. The organization has made great strides for the California olive oil industry and has grown to represent over 90% of the olive oil production in California. Over the last 25 years, the COOC has worked tirelessly in pursuit of grower education, quality standards and consumer assurance, including the establishment of the first sensory panel for olive oil in North America as well as the renowned Seal Certification Program.

Around a table of enthusiastic farmers in Napa, the idea for a trade group to encourage plantings and reinforce quality was born. Initiated by the organization's founder, Lila Jaeger, this discussion group was the basis for the formation of the COOC and the first glimpse of what would become one of the most important specialty crops in the state.

The COOC remains the leader in the olive oil industry as record-breaking growth continues unabated. The industry, which provided 5.8% of all olive oil consumed in the United States in 2016 is now on track to see a sizeable increase in 2017. A few short years ago, California extra virgin olive oil made up just 1% of the market. The fall 2016 harvest produced an estimated 3.5 million gallons, an 800% gain made within the last decade. Efforts from the COOC were instrumental in this growth, as well as creating market access for growers and producers. The United States, after the European Union, is the largest consumer of olive oil in the world. Consumer demand for quality, traceability and support for California agriculture coupled with the remarkable health benefits of extra virgin grade olive oil are drivers in this success.

"The growth and recognition of the California olive oil industry has been unprecedented. Consumers and retailers have provided tremendous support to both the COOC and our producers by embracing the stringent requirements of the COOC's Seal Certification Program", said Patricia Darragh, executive director of the California Olive Oil Council. "

The hallmark of the COOC, its Seal Certification Program, was established in 1998. The program provides assurances to retailers and consumers that the olive oils in the program have met the COOC's exacting standards for extra virgin olive oil grade. Each year, the mandatory program requires that all grower/producer members submit their oils to the program ensuring high quality, traceability and transparency.

The COOC will be exhibiting at the Specialty Food Association's Winter Fancy Food Show (booth 370) from January 22-24 at the Moscone Center in San Francisco. In their booth, the COOC will be showcasing certified California extra virgin olive oil from the 2016 harvest as well as providing information on the Seal Certification Program and the Retail Assessment Program, aimed at providing sensory assessment services to retailers and distributors. This year marks the organization's 15<sup>th</sup> year as members of the Specialty Food Association. The COOC is honored to be part of this important venue highlighting specialty foods.

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The COOC ([www.cooc.com](http://www.cooc.com)) 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 and the state produces over 99% of the olive oil in the United States.