



INTERNATIONAL OLIVE COUNCIL OVERVIEW

The [International Olive Council \(IOC\)](#) is the world's only international intergovernmental organisation in the field of olive oil and table olives. It was set up in Madrid, Spain, in 1959, under the auspices of the United Nations.

The Council is a decisive player in contributing to the sustainable and responsible development of olive growing and it serves as a world forum for discussing policymaking issues and tackling present and future challenges. It does so by:

- Encouraging international technical cooperation on research and development projects, training and the transfer of technology.
- Encouraging the expansion of international trade in olive oil and table olives, drawing up and updating product trade standards and improving quality.
- Investigating the environmental impact of olive growing and the olive industry.
- Promoting world consumption of olive oil and table olives through innovative campaigns and action plans.
- Supplying clear, accurate information and statistics on the world olive and olive oil market.
- Enabling government representatives and experts to meet regularly to discuss problems and concerns and to fix priorities for IOC action.
- Working in close partnership with the private sector.

Its current membership [Members](#) includes the leading international producers and exporters of olive oil and table olives: Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Egypt, European Union, Georgia, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia, Turkey, Uruguay and Uzbekistan. IOC producer Members account for 94% of world olive production.

The IOC is committed to the integrated, sustainable development of world olive growing. It attempts to translate this commitment into tangible advancement for its Member countries and, most importantly, for the ordinary people who earn their livelihood from the produce of the olive tree.

The IOC's work is divided into three main areas: [olive growing, olive oil technology and technical cooperation](#); [standardisation and research](#); [the promotion of olive products, dissemination of information and the olive economy](#).



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To mark [World Olive Day](#) (26 November), which aims to protect the olive tree and promote the values of peace, wisdom and harmony that it symbolises, the IOC organises a series of events around the world to discuss important matters for the olive world.

IOC ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE IPPC/FAO (2020-2021)

Most IOC activities related to the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) are organised by its Olive Growing, Olive Oil Technology and Environment Unit and its two departments: technical cooperation and training; and olive oil technology and the environment.

Memorandum of Understanding between the FAO and the IOC

In July 2021, the IOC and the FAO signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for collaboration to develop, promote and strengthen joint actions to support a more efficient and sustainable olive sector.

The aims of these actions include: developing a programme of activities to (i) increase the capacities of institutional and private operators all along the value chain, and (ii) raise awareness of olive oil quality amongst stakeholders; leveraging the IOC's and the FAO's knowledge and expertise on plant protection, particularly on *Xylella fastidiosa*, to provide coordinated messages on the subject to FAO and IOC Members; leveraging the IOC's and the FAO's knowledge and expertise on genetic resources to plan and implement activities related to the identification, preservation and utilisation of olive genetic resources in collaboration with FAO and IOC Members; and collecting and disseminating clear, accurate information and statistics on the olive and olive oil supply chain and markets.

True Healthy Olive Cultivars (THOC) project

The IOC launched the THOC project with the University of Córdoba (UCO) and the IOC network of olive germplasm banks¹ to:

¹ The IOC has been promoting a network of banks containing olive genetic material since 1994. These banks aim to preserve the heritage of olive varieties grown in countries around the world. The IOC network included 2 banks in as many countries. Three collections (Cordoba, Spain; Marrakech, Morocco; and Izmir, Turkey) are considered international banks and preserve all the varieties of the network located in the different countries in the three different climatic zones.



- guarantee the authenticity and health of the most common olive trees in the nurseries of the IOC network;
- apply a single and effective protocol for authentication, varietal identification and pathogen-free verification of plants produced by nurseries;
- establish a list of complementary names of authenticated cultivars used in international trade;
- deliver initial material to nurseries to certify their own plants;
- create the first catalogue of the main varieties used in international trade;
- promote synergy between banks, thus consolidating the IOC network;
- improve the quality of olive seedlings to avoid planting errors and prevent the spread of diseases caused by pathogens such as *Verticillium dhaliae* and *Xylella fastidiosa*.

The THOC project will provide national collections in IOC member countries with the necessary resources to certify their genetic resources.

Phytosanitary management of germplasm banks in the IOC network

The Executive Secretariat held a training course on the phytosanitary management of germplasm banks for the people in charge of the collections. The aim of the course was to provide the IOC network with the information needed to set up mechanisms for surveillance, control and phytosanitary management in national and international germplasm collections. The course was organised in collaboration with the international germplasm collection of Marrakech, the team at the UCO and Prof. Luis Rallo, the coordinator of the IOC germplasm banks

Workshop: Certification System for olive tree plants

The aim of this workshop was to strengthen and harmonise a certification system for olive plant trees so that the varieties traded internationally are authentic and free from pathogens, in line with the recommendations and regulations issued by the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO) and the European Union (EU).

The production of olive plants without certification may result in the dissemination of pest and diseases and mistaken varieties that do not meet requirements entering plantations.



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Participation in the revision of PM 4/17(2): Sanitary certification of olive trees and rootstocks

The IOC participated in several online meetings organized by the EPPO to discuss PM4/17 standard (2). This standard describes the production of olive trees and rootstocks subject to sanitary certification (the first PM was approved in 1996 and revised in 2005).

During these meeting, there was an active exchange of views on the different draft regulations. Proposals were made to change olive seedling production schemes, make specific changes to the regulations, add new references, revise annexes (new diagnostic techniques for pathogen detection) and assess the non-quarantine regulated pests (NQPPs) included in PM4/17(2) (decision to eliminate some irrelevant viruses, as well as the option to include *Xylella fastidiosa* as an NQPP in affected areas).

International projects supported (among others):

SUSTAINOLIVE
GEN4OLIVE
CLIMOLIVEMED
XF-ACTORS
OLEA International
NOVATERRA
LIFE OLIVARES VIVOS
OLIVE4FUTURE

Activities to encourage research and post-graduate studies: PhD, master's and specialisation course scholarships

The IOC regularly awards scholarships for PhD, master's and specialisation courses. The overall objective of these activities is to encourage research and strengthen technical skills in IOC Member countries. It also aims to train professionals and researchers in olive growing and olive oil technology in response to the growing demand for specialists in the sector and to facilitate technology transfer, the exchange of information, experience and results, and promote mobility among Members.



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Organisation of international, regional and national meetings for the exchange of information, data and experiences, and to collect and disseminate information, and the organisation of missions to provide solutions for specific problems in situ.

Another category of activities developed by the IOC is the organisation of international, regional and national meetings between sectoral organisations and public and private bodies, for the exchange of information, data and experiences, and to collect and disseminate the results of research on sustainable and integrated olive growing, quality improvement, olive oil technology and the production of table olives, fraud control strategies, the harmonisation of standards and the health benefits of olive products. The activities also seek to support the acquisition of knowledge by the technical experts of the member countries to promote the transfer of experiences and know-how in the sector.