



North American Olive Oil Association Strengthens Standards and Quality Control *Efforts Aimed at Bolstering Transparency and Consumer Confidence*

NEPTUNE, N.J. – May 16, 2018 – In keeping with its goal to promote olive oil quality industry-wide, the [North American Olive Oil Association](#) (NAOOA) today announced that its members have taken significant steps to further strengthen the standards required for labeling, testing and participating in the organization’s Quality Seal Program. The NAOOA’s efforts potentially impact the diet and health of millions of American consumers with member products representing an estimated 85 percent of all branded olive oil sold in the United States.

“When people go to the store to buy olive oil, which is proven to be one of the healthiest things they put in their carts, we want them to have total confidence that they are getting a great product,” said Joseph R. Profaci, executive director of the NAOOA. “Although there’s significant evidence to support consumer trust in olive oil, including [research by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#) that tested 88 products labeled extra virgin and found no confirmed adulteration in any of the samples, there’s still a lot of misinformation and even outright fake news circulating about it. We want to give consumers even greater assurance by making our already rigorous standards even tougher.”

NAOOA membership has always required that all olive oil marketed by members must meet or exceed the standards set by the International Olive Council (IOC). The IOC was chartered by the United Nations and has been recognized for more than 50 years as the worldwide quality standard-setting body for the olive oil industry. To ensure these standards are being met, the NAOOA has supervised the sampling of an average of 200 olive oils per year for the past two decades, which are tested in independent labs certified by the IOC. The NAOOA’s Certified Quality Seal Program takes quality control a step further by submitting Seal products for testing even more frequently and including an initial organoleptic (sensory) analysis.

NAOOA members have now agreed to include compliance with the organization’s labeling guidelines as a condition of membership, which is critical, as labels are one of the first places a consumer goes to learn more about a product. NAOOA members have agreed to enhance labeling requirements in a several ways, including:

- **Ensuring Freshness Through Best-By Dates:** Best-by dates are now required on every NAOOA member label, which helps consumers ensure they are getting a fresh product. NAOOA members are expected to use a maximum best-by date of two years from the time of processing or bottling, which is stricter than the IOC standard. Members are also encouraged to take into account all variables that might impact freshness, including handling, turnover time and the characteristics of the olive oil used in a specific product. For example, extra virgin olive oil from certain varieties of olives does not maintain its unique characteristics as long as olive oil from other varieties, which may indicate that a shorter shelf life would be more appropriate. The topic of best-by dates will be discussed in greater detail at the NAOOA’s upcoming [Olive Oil Conference](#), held July 10-12, with a



presentation by Dan Flynn, executive director of the UC Davis Olive Center.

- **Ensuring Transparency on Olive Oil Country of Origin:** When a packer includes the name of a country or countries where an olive oil was “imported from” or “packed or bottled in,” that statement must now be immediately adjacent to the country of origin statement for complete transparency. This step gives consumers better clarity as to where the olives for the oil were grown.
- **Ensuring Transparency on Blends of Olive Oil with Other Edible Oils:** Any product that is less than 100 percent olive oil was already required to have a descriptive name or phrase to let consumers know that information, but additional standards have been added to ensure that the language on NAOOA members’ labels is clear and fully informative.
- **Clearer Recommendations for Storage and Usage:** Members are now required to include on their labels storage instructions intended to prolong the shelf life of the olive oil since exposure to heat, light and air can all cause deterioration. An example of such a recommendation would be, “Store in a cool, dark place away from heat and light. Cap when not in use.” Additionally, the NAOOA highly recommends that labels include information on smoke point to help consumers better understand how to use the product. (For more information on olive oil smoke point, click [here](#).)

For members of the Quality Seal Program, the NAOOA will now conduct a label review for all products, as well as implementing the following enhancement:

- **Further Protections for Organic Products:** If a product label indicates an olive oil is organic, before it is tested through the Seal program, the applicant must provide copies of organic certification documents from the certifying agent authorized under the National Organic Program (NOP) or another certification body recognized by NOP.

“As the trade group representing the majority of olive oil sold in the U.S., we insist our members comply with the broadest set of standards,” said Profaci. “Couple that with our Quality Seal Program, which is the most robust olive oil certification in America, and you’ve got a very strong effort to ensure consumers are getting a high-quality olive oil they can trust every time. We remain absolutely committed to making reliable quality our number one priority.”

NAOOA members have agreed that the new standards will go into effect immediately, and their products will be in compliance no later than Jan. 1, 2019.

About the North American Olive Oil Association

Established in 1989, the North American Olive Oil Association is a trade association of marketers, packagers and importers of olive oil in the United States, Canada and their respective suppliers abroad. The association strives to foster a better understanding of olive oil and its taste, versatility and health benefits. For more information, visit www.AboutOliveOil.org and www.OliveOilConference.com.