

Table olive perspectives

This chapter reviews some of the history of olive growing, with particular reference to table olives and the current features of the international olive trade. Information is provided for olive growers and processors on how the Australian table olive industry is placed within the international table olive market, particularly with respect to export and the local table olive markets. Australia is a significant importer of table olives and there are great opportunities for expanding the Australian table olive industry. This section also examines the regions of Australia in which olives can be successfully grown. Olives are grown commercially in all Australian states and possibly in the Northern Territory. A conceptual model of the Australian table olive industry is given in a schematic form.

Introduction

Table olives are either produced at home or on commercial premises. Home processing of table olives is very popular among Australians, particularly those with Mediterranean or Middle Eastern origins.

Table olives are prepared from the raw fruit of the European or domesticated olive *Olea europaea* L. Hoff. Raw olives are picked when green-ripe, turning colour or black-ripe, depending on the processing style to be used. Raw olives are inedible due to the presence of the extremely bitter glucoside, oleuropein. Processing raw olives to reduce bitterness and make them edible can be undertaken by soaking them in water, brine or dilute alkali, or by drying, salting or heating.

Today the Australian olive industry, which involves both growing olives and processing them into foodstuffs, is vibrant and dynamic. The quantities of olive oil and table olives produced are expected to increase significantly over the next few years. Substantial investment has been made into establishing olive orchards and processing facilities in the major mainland states of Australia using the latest international