LESSON 2 PRODUCT AND HANDLING SPECIFICATIONS

Definition

A product specification is a clear written and documented description of the features of your olives. It provides information about all the relevant variables that make your olives acceptable for further processing and includes information about how they should be handled and stored.

It is important to take into account and document the intended use of your olives. For example, olives that are intended as a raw material for oil extraction would have different requirements to olives intended for pickling.

Why Have Product and Handling Specifications?

Product and handling specifications are written to reflect the requirements of the olive processing customer as well as legal requirements. The specifications may be provided to you by your processor or developed by you in consultation with your processor.

The product and handling specifications are used as a guide when developing your Olive Care Approved Supplier Program. All activities in your grove are performed to assure your olives comply with your product and handling specification.

What should be in a Product and Handling Specification?

The following categories should be considered in the product specifications:

General Description	Olive variety, processing customer, intended use
Product quality	Maturity, size, colour, defect levels
Handling requirements	Type of container, handling instructions, product ID, transport method, delivery time, temperature management
Food safety	Contaminants (Physical, Chemical, Biological)

What are the Steps to Developing a Specification?

When developing specifications the following steps should be followed:

1. Contact the olive processing plant you supply and ask their Quality Manager for a copy of their harvested olive specifications.
2. Check legal or other special requirements eg. Maximum Residue Limits (MRL's)[1], Maximum Permissible Contaminants (MPC's)[2].
3. Assess your ability to meet these requirements both technically and financially.
4. Document a draft specification of the olives you are producing and how they are handled. You may use the example Product and Handling Specification below as a guide. (A blank copy attached may be used as a template.).
5. Show your draft to you processing customer and discuss the details.
6. Once you both agree on the specification file your Product and Handling Specification in a safe place.

These Maximum residue Limits may have changed

Please visit http://www.apvma.gov.au/ for more details

Please Note: The MRL's Listed below are not current, they are only an example

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[1] The Maximum residue Limits for fresh olives are:

Carbaryl	Less than 10 mg/kg of olives
Chlorpyrifos	Less than 0.05 mg/kg of olives
Cypermethrin	Less than 0.05 mg/kg of olives
Diazinon	Less than 2.0 mg/kg of olives
Fenthion	Less than 1.0 mg/kg of olives
Fluazifop-butyl	Less than 0.05 mg/kg of olives
Glufosinate & Glufosinate ammonium	Less than 0.1 mg/kg of olives
Glyphosate	Less than 0.1 mg/kg of olives
Methidathion	Less than 1.0 mg/kg of olives
Paraquat	Less than 1.0 mg/kg of olives
Pendimethalin	Less than 0.05 mg/kg of olives

(Ref. *Australian and New Zealand Food Authority Food Standards Code, Standard A14.*)

[2] Maximum Permissible Concentrations (MPC) for metal contaminants in fresh olives are:

Antimony	Less than 1.0 mg/kg of olives
Copper	Less than 10.0 mg/kg of olives
Lead	Less than 0.5 mg/kg of olives
Mercury	Less than 0.03 mg/kg of olives
Selenium	Less than 1.0 mg/kg of olives
Tin	Less than 150.0 mg/kg of olives
Zinc	Less than 150.0 mg/kg of olives

(Ref. *Australian and New Zealand Food Authority Food Standards Code, Standard A12.*)

Product and Handling Specification Example

General Description

Variety / Type	Jumbo
District	Southern Downs, Queensland Region
Harvest Period	Early Harvest
Customer	Downs Olive Oil Extraction Co-op
Intended use	For crushing, virgin olive-oil production

Product Quality

Maturity	• Early Harvest • No evidence of over-ripe or "oozing" olives. • No "off" smells
Defect Allowances	• Less than 10% Physical damage (bursts, breaks, bird strikes) • Less than 10% Shrivelled (low moisture content in fruit)
Contaminants	• No evidence of olive branches • Less than 5% olive sticks and leaves • Less than 1% other leaves • No evidence of ants

Storage, Handling, Transport and Labelling Requirements

Packaging	Plastic Bulk Bins. No greater than 50 cm layer depth
Labelling	Each bin marked with harvest date, Grove name and address, harvest location (reference within grove, see grove map)
Storage Conditions	Packed bins stored under cover in well ventilated area
Pulp Temperature	Less than 25°C (measured at centre of harvest bin)
Maximum Storage Time	7 days (from harvest to delivery at processing plant)
Transport	• Food transport in covered bins or in covered transport. • Food transport free from contaminants. All contact areas of transport to be clean. • Not to be transported with chemicals (fertiliser, pesticide, fuels, cleaning or sanitising agents).

Food Safety

Contaminants	**Physical:** • Free of physical hazards. • < 1% stones or dirt. **Chemical:** No detectable evidence of contamination from oil, grease or petrochemicals. Maximum Residue Limits. • Carbaryl Less than 10 mg/kg of olives • Diazinon Less than 2 mg/kg of olives • Glyphosate Less than 0.1 mg/kg of olives • Paraquat Less than 1 mg/kg of fruit (Ref. *Australian and New Zealand Food Authority Food Standards Code, Standard A14.*) Maximum Permissible Contaminants • Antimony Less than 1.0 mg/kg of olives • Copper Less than 10.0 mg/kg of olives • Lead Less than 0.5 mg/kg of olives • Mercury Less than 0.03 mg/kg of olives • Selenium Less than 1.0 mg/kg of olives • Tin Less than 150.0 mg/kg of olives • Zinc Less than 150.0 mg/kg of olives (*Ref. Australian and New Zealand Food Authority Food Standards Code, Standard A12.*) **Biological:** No visual evidence of mould blooms.