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Producing quality raw olives

Orchard siting and the requirements for growing high quality table olives are discussed in this chapter. Site preparation and climatic considerations, particularly with respect to moisture requirements, are outlined. Varietal selection, relevant to the types of final table olive products to be produced, is discussed. We also deal with the factors to be considered in selecting cultivars: olive size and shape, Flesh:Stone ratio, flesh detachment, firmness, colour and stone shape. Soil requirements, light, canopy and training development, olive nutrient requirements and tree row placement are examined. Information is also provided on the visual diagnosis of specific problems, requirements for chemical testing, and overcoming plant nutritional problems. Common pests and disease problems are reviewed; however, if sprays are used the authors consider that a record of type and time of application are essential requirements. The maturation states of olives are discussed and suggestions for the best time of harvesting are made. Methods of handling olive fruit during harvesting and post-harvest are detailed. The undesirable qualities of raw olives with respect to table olive production are presented.

Introduction

Good quality olives are required to produce quality table olive products. Hence, quality starts at the olive orchard. The grower needs to understand the olive tree and the qualities of the fruit produced (see Chapter 2). Poor selection of varieties, particularly if grown under sub-optimal conditions, can influence the properties of raw olives, which will impact on finished table olive products. Grower, consumer and quality considerations for table olives are summarised in Table 3.1.