

WEED MANAGEMENT SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC.



Position statement on management of feral olives in South Australia

The Weed Management Society of South Australia Inc. seeks actions to minimise the weed risk to the South Australian environment of an expanding olive industry.

Background:

- The WMSSA Inc. convened a forum in April 2001 to examine the conflict of interest between a developing olive industry in South Australia and the increasing problem of feral olives invading bushland.
- Much of the current distribution of feral olives in South Australia is sourced from orchards abandoned during the late 1800s/ early 1900s after low prices made harvesting uneconomic. Feral olive infestations occur in all agricultural regions of South Australia.
- Feral olives have been found to be the cause of major reductions in biodiversity with a loss of greater than 50% in the species richness and abundance of native vegetation having been measured in the Adelaide hills.
- Control of feral olives is difficult and expensive. Costs of **up to \$10-15,000/ha** can be incurred for labour and equipment costs of chainsawing, herbicide treatment and follow-up measures. Such costs are being borne by Councils, the National Parks & Wildlife Service, Friends/Bushcare groups, Catchment Management Boards and private landholders.
- The olive industry is undergoing a significant expansion in South Australia, with considerable small and large-scale enterprises being established in many regions.
- There are concerns over the long-term economic viability of small and/or isolated orchards, particularly with respect to cheap imported oil. Primary Industries and Resources South Australia (PIRSA) is able to provide information on the economic viability of new olive orchards.
- The Animal and Plant Control Commission (APCC) has developed risk assessment and management guidelines for olives, in consultation with the olive industry and conservation groups. A number of Councils have adopted these guidelines to assess the weed risks posed by new orchards, prior to approval or rejection of a development application. However, there has not been a uniform adoption by Councils.
- Feral olive plants are proclaimed under the Animal and Plant Control Act in South Australia. However, according to the Act, landowners are responsible for control on their lands even if the olives originate from another property. Local Animal and Plant Control Boards can elect to declare planted olives feral if they remain unharvested for two years.

Issue:

The Weed Management Society of South Australia Inc. is concerned that new olive orchards, unless appropriately located and managed, will become a source of new infestations in natural areas of conservation significance.

Responsibilities and Actions sought:***Councils (Local Government)***

- 1) Have uniform adoption of the APCC's olive risk assessment and management guidelines by Councils across SA.
- 2) Use Memorandum of Understanding agreements between Council and the orchard manager to ensure best management practices to minimise olive spread are adhered to.

State government

- 1) Regularly update economic information for prospective investors in olive production in South Australia.
- 2) Ensure olive developments are treated as a merit form of development and listed as a category 2 for public notification purposes in Local Government Development Plans. Category 2 is notification of adjoining owners is required. Redefine horticulture under the Development Act (1993) so that olives are treated separately.
- 3) Develop a legal framework for olive orchards via the Development Act (1993) to ensure best practice guidelines are observed. Land Management agreements should be promoted to Local Government.
- 4) Produce weed risk maps to define suitable and unsuitable areas for olive production in SA.
- 5) Consider a cost sharing approach with landholders and the olive industry to eradicate new olive infestations in previously clean areas.

Animal and Plant Control Commission/Boards

- 1) Review the APCC risk assessment and management guidelines to ensure it meets best practice and has been satisfactorily adopted by local government and the olives industry in SA.
- 2) Monitor new orchards in high risk areas for regular harvesting and control of feral olives (on the orchard property). Also significant amenity plantings (e.g. windbreaks). Seek control action under the provisions of the APC Act if needed.
- 3) Ensure community and industry awareness of the biodiversity threats posed by feral olives.
- 4) Develop regional plans to strategically manage feral olives populations.

Olive Industry

- 1) Maintain industry awareness of the APCC's risk assessment and management guidelines for new and existing orchards.
- 2) Foster an industry responsibility to control escapees from orchards, in consultation with adjacent landholders.
- 3) Ensure that investors are fully informed of the economic viability of small and/or isolated orchards.

Weed Management Society of South Australia Inc.

- 1) Increase community awareness of the weed risk of unmanaged or inappropriately placed olive orchards.
- 2) Foster research into the improved management of feral olives and promote the research outcomes to weed managers.
- 3) Provide support for WMSSA Inc. members seeking to minimise threats posed by olive orchards to significant native vegetation in their local area.