

Shorter, Chere

From: mat@figueroafarms.com%inter2 [mat@figueroafarms.com] on behalf of mat@figueroafarms.com
Sent: Wednesday, December 08, 2004 4:24 PM
To: Shorter, Chere
Subject: Olive Oil Standards

Dear Ms. Shorter,

My husband, Shawn, and I own an olive orchard and an olive mill in California and produce extra virgin olive oil. Shawn has written to you separately, and I would like to support what he wrote. As small growers and producers, it is essential for us to be able to compete on a level playing field. The lack of meaningful definitions for olive oil allows some foreign and U.S. companies to label and promote olive oil as extra virgin when it is not. As he told you, we can test oils for free fatty acids and peroxides content; when we test store bought oils labeled "extra virgin olive oil", it is not uncommon that some do not comply with the International Olive Oil Council standards or the European Community standards. The fact that these companies can label their olive oil as extra virgin legally when it is in fact cheaper and lesser quality oil makes it extremely difficult for people like us to be competitive. This is true for all the local growers we mill for. We are not asking for special protection, trade barriers, or subsidies, but for standard definitions that allow grocery stores and consumers to compare apples to apples.

In addition, as a consumer, it worries me greatly to know that I am not better protected by legal U.S. standards. I wonder what other products I buy at the store are labeled incorrectly. I believe that it is critical to adopt meaningful standards for the protection of the American consumer, grocery store owner, oil producer, and olive farmers.

Thank you very much for your consideration. Please feel free to call me with any questions you may have.

Antoinette Addison
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