



Olive Oil Needs a Standard of Identity

Olive oil needs a federal standard of identity (SOI) to eliminate confusion among consumers when making choices for their health and to promote fair dealing in the industry by creating consistent rules for labeling across the United States. Olive oil promotes good health, a major reason **that U.S. consumption is second in the world after the E.U.** Four states have created olive oil standards, but they are divergent. The USDA adopted voluntary standards, but they are not uniformly followed. The need for an olive oil SOI is supported by industry groups for both domestic producers and importers, as well a national consumer rights organization.

Challenge	Solution
<p>Consumers are susceptible to confusion and deception about the health benefits of olive oil. Health is a major reason consumers choose olive oil, but the healthy attributes vary by olive oil type and grade--for which no enforceable federal definitions or standards exist.</p>	<p>An SOI will enable consumers to make informed choices about their health, creating clear definitions for the different olive oil grades and types and establishing consistent labeling regulations.</p>
<p>Consumer research finds confusion over labeling and terminology dissuades people from using olive oil. A wide majority of Americans recognize olive oil as the healthiest cooking oil, but less than half of households use it. Significant confusion exists over terms like "pure" and "extra light," and nearly 1/3 of people aren't sure or don't believe that olive oil comes from olives.</p>	<p>By providing clear labels and terminology, an SOI will empower consumers to decide for themselves whether to use more olive oil. As determined by scientific consulting firm Exponent, a mere 20% increase in adherence to a Mediterranean-style or similar diet would save the U.S. \$20 billion in health care costs.</p>
<p>Olive oil is a growth industry in the U.S. that is threatened by the lack of uniform standards. Substantial investments are being made in the U.S. in olive farming, milling, importing, packaging and distribution operations, including planting of new orchards in 10 states.</p>	<p>An SOI will protect industry stakeholders, spur additional investments in the olive oil sector, create jobs and facilitate exports by establishing consistent, enforceable U.S. olive oil standards.</p>
<p>The olive oil standards enacted in four states are inconsistent, creating potential conflicts and challenges in enforcement efforts.</p>	<p>An SOI will harmonize olive oil standards for the benefit of consumers and the industry, and promote fair, consistent and nationally enforceable labeling regulations.</p>
<p>A small but persistent percentage of olive oils sold in retail are not in compliance with voluntary USDA standards, according to extensive annual random sampling and certified testing by the North American Olive Oil Association. Those findings are consistent with peer-reviewed FDA research.</p>	<p>An SOI would facilitate national enforcement of standards by a self-regulating industry, as well as by the FDA and state consumer protection agencies, as needed, to ensure fair dealing and to protect consumers.</p>

A Standard of Identity for Olive Oil Would:

Protect Consumers

Ensure Quality

Eliminate Confusion