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Member for Kingston

Speech to Federal Parliament
19 March 2009

Importance of Primary Production in Kingston

(Kingston) (10:37 AM) —I rise today to speak on an issue of great importance, and also a key primary production sector in the electorate of Kingston, and that is the growing olives and olive oil. This is not often given much attention. However, every day I think that many of us around the country use olive oil on a daily basis. The production of olive oil on the Fleurieu Peninsula is incredibly important to enrich our local area, both economically and culturally.

This has been fostered in the Fiesta! food festival on the Fleurieu Peninsula. The Fleurieu Peninsula is well-known for its great wines, through McLaren Vale and other areas, but what is not as well-known is the great food that is produced there. Fiesta! is a festival that does focus on the food, and the wine that complements that food. And as part of Fiesta! there are olive awards which really focus on great olive oil. I have been lucky enough to taste it. It was a unique experience to be able to taste olive oil—usually you taste wine—but it was great. You could really start to taste some of the great flavours in the olive oil that comes from the Fleurieu Peninsula. Olive oils, and the growing of olives, are incredibly to my electorate. However, the production of olive oil in the region is not without its challenges. One of those challenges is water, as with many things in South Australia.

But another challenge that faces the industry is the lack of transparency in terms of labelling, and that is what I will focus on today. Australian olive oil generally, and certainly the oil produced on the Fleurieu Peninsula, is of world best standard. I believe we need to consider advocating a standard for olive oil here in Australia. One concern that has been raised by olive growers is that sometimes there can be fruit other than olives put into olive oil but that fact is not labelled. It is very important that there be a clear standard in Australia that olive oil is exactly that and is made from olive fruit. In addition, the terms 'virgin olive oil' and 'extra virgin olive oil' are often talked about. Most Australian families understand that, for health reasons, extra virgin olive oil is the best sort of oil to be using. Often we see oil coming into our country which is called extra virgin olive oil but is in fact not refined or extra refined and does not have the same ingredients that extra virgin olive oil has.

This is of great concern to the olive oil producers of Australia because they are competing in an international market with oils that are not of as high a

standard but are labelled in exactly the same way. However, I recognise the efforts of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. They recently went to Malaysia to try to get these international standards that are so important for olive oil. Unfortunately, they were not able to achieve that. However, they are going to continue to work with their international partners to ensure that these standards are met.

This is an issue not only for the olive oil industry but also for many consumers. Certainly, consumers are very concerned about what they put into their mouths and they want to know that what they are eating and cooking with is what they believe they have bought. In addition, the olive oil industry has other concerns and they are certainly concerns that I share. It is important that consumers understand the difference between different types of oil.

Before I looked into this area, I would often go and grab whatever olive oil was on the shelf because I felt that it had good properties. But getting Australian consumers to understand the different types of oil and the effect that they have on one's cooking and one's health is also very important. I certainly support information being made available to consumers to help them make the choice about which olive oil is best for their family. In conclusion, I congratulate the olive oil industry in Australia but also the olive industry in the Fleurieu Peninsula which do a great job.