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**PRESS RELEASE**  
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The hour of crucial decisions, concerning the present and future of Greek olive oil, aiming at turning its high quality into financial results is here

The great significance of olive oil leads to resentment and inevitably to an all-deepening confrontation with competitive products. If the sights are indeed set on the olive and olive oil, we should endorse and safeguard their quality and promote them in the market branded, packaged and with high added value.

These were the chief conclusions of the two day Conference on the new European Union Strategy on Quality and the prospects of Greek olive oil, that was held in Athens on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2001 by the specialized magazine "Olive and Olive Oil", with the support of the European Commission and under the auspices of the Greek Ministry of Agriculture.

The interest common to all that participated in the Conference lay in the need to further safeguard and endorse the very high quality of Greek olive oil. Also to take initiatives and measures for the promotion and marketing of this national agricultural product both in the national as well as in the international market.

The over 300 participants stressed the need to come to grips with the sales of unbranded olive oil in 16kilo tins, an issue that should come first on the agenda of the to be National Interprofessional Organisation for olive oil, the founding of which, as it was noted, will play a decisive role in the unravelling of the sector's problems.

The European Union strategy upholding olive oil quality, as the latter is presented in the new Common Organisation of the Market for olive oil, will be the framework within which all bodies involved with olive oil will move. In the same trend will be the measures that will actively bring out and establish beyond any doubt the high quality of olive oil, while shielding it from any possible ill repute.

Moreover, the quality strategy should go hand in hand with such prices, which will allow Greek olive oil producers to continue unhindered in the cultivation of the olive and which will make investments in the promotion of branded, packaged olive oil in the market a viable possibility.

In his inaugural speech the Greek Minister of Agriculture, Mr. G. Anomeritis stressed that the three basic objectives of the government's policy are the protection of the income of olive oil producers, the promotion of olive oil and table olives, and the safeguarding of quality. The Ministry of Agriculture, said Mr Anomeritis, will be unrelenting where the timetable set for the compilation and operation of the Olive Registry is concerned, as that will consist the basis on which from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2003 and onwards all community subsidies will be allotted to Greek olive oil producers.

The olive oil sector will take precedence in the agricultural policy of New Democracy, said its M.P., responsible for Agriculture, Mr. Evangelos Basiakos and so did Mr. Kostis Chadgidakis, Member of the European Parliament of the same Party. Mr. Theodoros Pagalos, M.P. of PASOK, the governing party, stressed the need for a continuous effort in the area of structural improvement in the sector.

The Conference's aim, i. e. to further the knowledge and information available to the olive oil producer and the bodies pertinent to the product was greatly assisted by the valuable talks and addresses of the Greek speakers, the European Union representatives, Mr, J. M. Gazagnes, Head of the Olive Oil Division in the European Commission and Mr. Ev. Divaris, Chief Administrator of the same Division, the International Olive Oil Council representative Mr. Boubaker Thabet, Deputy Director and Head of the Promotion Division, Mr J.G. Moya, Director of ASOLIVA and Mr. En. Lupi, President of FEMO. Their interventions greatly contributed to a fertile dialogue within a frame of mind strongly tinted with colours of unity and cooperation between the olive oil producing countries of the Mediterranean.