

## **III Soil O-live International Olive Oil Contest. The Soil Health & Olive Oil Quality Awards 2026**

Producing high-quality olive oil should not compromise environmental sustainability or soil health. Healthy soil promotes biodiversity and supports key agronomic functions. The Horizon Europe-funded Soil O-live project investigates the connection between soil health and olive oil quality in the Mediterranean. Two partners, DEOLEO GLOBAL and the University of Jaén (INUO-UJA) in Spain, have organized the inaugural Soil O-live International Olive Oil Contest: The Soil Health & Olive Oil Quality Awards 2026. This competition encourages farmers to produce high-quality olive oil while maintaining soil health in accordance with top environmental standards. It is the first global event to recognize soil health as a crucial factor in sustainable olive oil production.

### **NORMS AND BASES**

#### **Selection criteria and evaluation**

The Soil Health & Olive Oil Quality Awards aim to emphasize soil biodiversity as a key indicator of soil health and to promote excellence in olive oil production in line with international standards. The awards process will be divided into two parts. First, the Soil O-live scientific committee (hereafter called "the committee") will examine five soil sample replicates (totaling 50 grams of topsoil from the 0-20 cm layer) from each olive orchard where the oil was produced. The biological parameter chosen to assess soil biodiversity will be Soil Basal Respiration, as outlined in the European Parliament and Council Directive on Soil Monitoring and Resilience [Soil Monitoring Law, 2023/0232 (COD)]. The Committee will report the Soil Basal Respiration results ( $\mu\text{g CO}_2\text{-C g}^{-1} \text{hr}^{-1}$ ) to the Contest Jury, ranked from highest to lowest. Orchards in the second quartile of Soil Basal Respiration will move on to the Olive Oil Tasting phase. The tasting will adhere to the international quality standards set by the International Olive Oil Council.

Participants should send their soil samples and olive oil samples (500 ml) before May 30 to:

**Instituto Universitario de Investigación en Olivar y Aceites de Oliva (INUO).**

**Universidad de Jaén**

**Laboratorio de Ecología. Edificio C-6, Room 113**

**Paraje de las Lagunillas s/n, 23071 Jaén (España)**

### The Qualifying Panel

The panel assessing the Soil O-live Project contest entries will consist of distinguished experts from institutions like IFAPA, the University of Jaén, and the contest sponsors DEOLEO and INUO-UJA. However, its members will remain undisclosed until after the decision is announced. The panel members' list will be available on the project's website, [www.soilolive.eu](http://www.soilolive.eu), and on social media channels. The jury will consider all the outlined criteria.

### Relevant dates and prizes

Soil analyses are planned for May 2026, followed by an olive oil tasting event in June 2026. The winners of the best olive oils from healthy soils will be announced after the event.

Three awards will be given for the top olive oils produced from healthy soils, across three organoleptic categories: best medium-green fruity, best intense-green fruity, and best mature-intense fruity. Additionally, the contest will also include a special recognition for the healthiest soil among all participating samples. The Jury's decision will be final, and the awards will be presented at a public ceremony.

### Acceptance and Authorization

By submitting an entry for the award, you agree to the terms and conditions outlined in these rules. You also authorize DEOLEO and INUO-UJA to share the prize results as they deem appropriate.

Please note that DEOLEO and INUO-UJA have the right to take any actions not covered in these rules to ensure the award's success. These organizations' decisions will not be subject to claims or challenges.

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