



## Introducing OliveRec: The App for Collaborating on Olive Tree Genetic Improvement

***OliveRec** is launched with the goal of collecting data to aid the genetic improvement of olive trees. The initiative involves not only technicians but also citizens, creating a shared network of useful information to tackle challenges posed by climate change and pathogens. **Salov**, always at the forefront, is providing a portion of the olive grove at Villa Filippo Berio, the chosen location for the official app presentation, to support the project and research activities.*

**Massarosa, May 16, 2024** – Today, the official presentation of OliveRec was held at Villa Filippo Berio, an agricultural estate owned by the Salov Group in the countryside of Vecchiano (PI). The app, created as part of the European GEN4OLIVE project and developed by **AEDIT** – a spin-off company from the Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies in Pisa – in collaboration with **TEA GROUP** and supported by **CNR-IBE**, enables ordinary citizens to report olive trees potentially useful for various ongoing olive cultivation projects at major research institutions both in Italy and abroad.

In addition to hosting the presentation, Salov – an industrial group and one of the leading global players in the olive oil sector, owning the brands **Filippo Berio and Sagra** – plays a key role in the project by providing its extensive 75-hectare olive grove in front of Villa Filippo Berio for research and experimental activities. Salov S.p.A thus continues its collaboration with CNR aimed at enhancing the immense potential of olive biodiversity

## An App for Shared Mapping of Biodiversity

The long-term goal of the OliveRec project is to collect data useful for the genetic improvement of olive trees, providing researchers and operators with a simple and immediate system for data archiving and sharing. The app also involves citizens in this shared network of biodiversity information acquisition, which is essential for addressing the challenges posed by climate change and pathogens, particularly the threat of *Xylella Fastidiosa*.

"At present, various projects are aimed at identifying plants that survive *Xylella* in affected areas or centenarian plants in different Mediterranean countries, as well as unknown olive varieties from which genes resistant to biological and environmental stress can be sourced," explains Claudio Cantini from the CNR Institute for BioEconomy. "Citizens and sector technicians can help us by downloading the app and



reporting olive trees with interesting characteristics, such as lower susceptibility to pests or high yield."

Optimized for Android and iOS operating systems, the new mobile application features an intuitive user interface as one of its strengths. "Anyone can use the very simple interface we have developed, assisting researchers in their work of mapping biodiversity in both cultivated and natural areas," says Diego Guidotti from AEDIT.

OliveRec not only allows researchers to manage all the information provided by users and collected in existing collections but also enables the uploading and use of data from sensors placed near the plants. In this regard, one of the project's partners, TEA Group, has developed innovative sensors capable of continuously signaling canopy growth to researchers, a characteristic useful for new plants to be cultivated.

"This app is already greatly aiding us in our work," emphasizes Dr. Soraya Mousavi from CNR. "Reports of useful plants for the OMIBREED project to combat *Xylella fastidiosa*, currently funded in Italy by MASAF, are coming to us from various countries with which we have scientific exchanges."

### **Villa Filippo Berio: Where "Olive Oil is at the Center" of Everything**

Salov hosts a collection field of olive trees obtained by crossing varieties resistant to *Xylella* at the agricultural estate of Villa Filippo Berio. The OliveRec app has been tested and is already being used to record data from a network of intelligent wireless sensors installed on the plants and in the soil.

The Villa Filippo Berio agricultural estate is equipped to be the place where "olive oil is at the center" of everything. Located in the floodplain between Lucca and Pisa, within the natural park area of Migliarino, San Rossore, and Massaciuccoli, the olive grove at Villa Filippo Berio is designed following a mechanization model of cultivation. It adheres to specific parameters that consider the nature of the territory and the olive varieties cultivated there: Frantoio, Leccino, Pendolino, and Leccio del Corno.

Therefore, it serves as a perfect open-air laboratory where, in collaboration with the CNR-IBE and academic institutions both in Italy and abroad, projects on new precision agriculture techniques, sustainable agriculture, biodiversity enhancement, and testing of cultivars resistant to both *Xylella* and *Verticillium* (a fungus that affects olive trees) are carried out.

"We are proud to support CNR and all partners in this further ambitious project of research and valorization of olive biodiversity, which is abundantly present in our



country," comments Ing. Fabio Maccari, CEO of Salov. "Our company has always been committed to research, and we are convinced that this project can make a fundamental contribution: it combines technical and scientific expertise with the strength of a network that can also benefit from the contribution of citizens. We are more convinced than ever that understanding and drawing from the heritage of olive biodiversity is the key to advancing towards sustainable olive cultivation, counteracting the effects of ongoing climate change, improving the chemical and organoleptic properties of oil, and revitalizing the olive oil sector."

Salov SpA was founded in 1919 by Giovanni Silvestrini, a historical business partner of Filippo Berio, the founder of the eponymous brand, along with a group of entrepreneurs from Lucca. The company quickly became a benchmark in the Lucca region and internationally. Salov is headquartered in Massarosa, in the province of Lucca, and is one of the largest companies in the olive oil sector, with a consolidated net turnover of approximately 491 million euros in 2022 and 120 million liters sold. Since 2015, it has been part of the international Bright Food Group.

The Salov Group has always been present in the Italian market with the historic Sagra brand and, for the first time in Italy, launched the Filippo Berio brand at the end of 2019. Filippo Berio, with over 150 years of history, holds a leadership position in the USA and UK, as well as in Belgium, Switzerland, and Hong Kong.

In Italy, Filippo Berio offers a dedicated range, meeting the demands of increasingly discerning consumers regarding quality, traceability, and sustainability. Thanks to the Berio Method, every stage of the production process is traced and certified, starting from the field and applying sustainable techniques of integrated production