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Ref: Q./

Madrid, 11 June 2020

Dear Ms Coemi,

I hope this letter finds you and your family well.

Thank you for your letter of 9 June 2020 on the operating conditions of the Swiss Olive Oil Panel in Wädenswil, Switzerland. For recognition, a panel must submit a request by the competent authority in its country that will send it to the International Olive Council (IOC). Please note that this panel did not mention the conditions of home tasting in its documentation.

In fact, following decision No. DEC-13/103-V/2015 regarding the IOC certificate for the recognition of laboratories undertaking the sensory analysis of virgin olive oils, point 1.2.3 states that laboratories must follow the provisions outlined in the current IOC method for the organoleptic assessment of virgin olive oils and the related standards. The official organoleptic assessment method (COI/T.20/Doc. No. 15) provides strict conditions that panels must comply with in a tasting session. Such conditions include the temperature of the tasting room and samples, adequate and continuous training for tasters, and the subsequent statistical processing of the results. What is more, the 'Guide for the installation of a test room' (COI/T.20/Doc. no. 6) explicitly states that a tasting session must take place in a test room.

Otherwise, home tasting, which takes place under non-laboratory conditions, does not produce objective results, since the conditions are not strictly controlled. Given that organoleptic assessment must take place under laboratory conditions, and given the pandemic, measures should be taken in the laboratory as in any other chemical laboratory.

For this reason, the IOC created a specific electronic working group on this matter during a videoconference on 5 June 2020. This group is composed of IOC experts in organoleptic assessment and will look into creating a specific protocol for tasting under pandemic conditions.

We inform you that the IOC will take the adequate measures to verify the operating conditions of the mentioned panel to make sure it complies with IOC conditions.

Thank you for providing us with this information. Please feel free to contact us should you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,

Abdellatif Ghedira  
Executive Director

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