



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Assemblymember Aguiar Curry Bill Will Actually Require California Olives in “California” Olive Oil**

SACRAMENTO, CA – Today, Assemblymember Cecilia Aguiar-Curry (D-Winters) introduced AB 535, which establishes clear guidelines on when the olive oil industry can use the term “California” on its product labeling and marketing. This bill protects Californian olive growers and manufacturers from being undercut in the market by oils that benefit from using the “California” name to mislead consumers about what they’re buying.

AB 535 is a reintroduction bill of last year’s AB 2074. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, bills were limited to prioritize COVID-19 and emergency-related legislation. However, Assemblymember Aguiar-Curry is determined to protect farmers and consumers.

“We demand the highest environmental, labor and consumer protection standards in the world of our farmers,” said Aguiar-Curry. “And, people worldwide recognize ‘California’ products come with that quality, based on those standards. Our State’s name should not be used as a cynical marketing ploy to give the impression you’re buying something you’re not.”

Currently, the state produces approximately 4% of the world’s olive oil from over 75 varieties of olives. Due to California’s well-established reputation for producing high-quality goods, the demand for Californian olive oil is increasing. Because of this high demand, there has been branding of olive oil with the term “California” or with a Californian regional designation even when the products blend oils from other places, including Spain, North Africa, Chile and Argentina. Some of these products, per those companies, have included as little as 14% California olive oil in such blends.

Existing law prohibits the labeling of olive oil as “California Olive Oil” unless 100% of the oil is derived from olives grown in the state. However, through a loophole in current law, a bottle of olive oil may be advertised as a “California” brand or a “California” company, but the fine print will specify that the oil inside the bottle is not derived entirely from California olives. AB 535 strengthens existing law by making it illegal to make any false representation that an olive oil is produced entirely from olives grown within California. Similarly, the bill applies a prohibition on false representations that an olive oil was produced from olives grown in a specific region of California, unless at least 85% of the olive oil was produced from olives grown in that region.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture requires California Olive Oil to meet strict quality standards, such as mandatory testing and sampling. California farmers compete around the world with farmers whose states or countries demand less stringent regulatory and testing standards.

“This bill will ensure that consumers know exactly what they are buying, and it will help to support our local farmers who are producing world class oils from olives grown here in our State. If we’re going to demand the best, we owe it to California farmers to at least support truth in the marketplace. It’s time we stop people from profiting off our name, by giving the impression consumers are getting something they’re not,” said Aguiar-Curry.

*Aguiar-Curry represents the 4th Assembly District, which includes all of Lake and Napa Counties, parts of Colusa, Solano and Sonoma Counties, and all of Yolo County except West Sacramento. [www.asm.ca.gov/aguiar-curry](http://www.asm.ca.gov/aguiar-curry)*

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