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Oils must pass test

The Australian Olive Association has signed off on an industry code of practice in response to imported products of poor quality.

Paul Miller, president of the association, said it was a "world first" and would promote the industry's reputation for high-quality extra virgin olive oil.

"In 2004, we found imported oil which did not comply with its label," he said.

"The government was not prepared to assist with this issue until the industry had a code of practice with its own approved industry standards."

To be certified, oil has to be from only Australian-grown olives and must undergo organoleptic (taste) and chemical testing for a free fatty acid (FFA) content of not more than 0.8 per cent, which is a broad indicator of quality.

Competition judge Richard Gavel said the average FFA of Australian oils was around 0.2 per cent, or four times less, and that was good news because it meant they had a higher smoke point, which made them more suitable for cooking.

Products that meet the standard will have a Certified Australian Extra Virgin logo and should start appearing on shop shelves in the next few months.