

Bee Products Standards Council

Jim Edwards
Chairman

The Bee Products Standards Council met on Wednesday the 25th November, 2009. All members were present and visitors included Stephen Franks and Pam McMillan (for the item on honey profile standards), Gemma Collier and Daniel Paul (for the items on honey profile standards and BPSC representation and communication). Jim Sim, Mike Clear and Greg Zemke-Smith from NZFSA also attended.

Refinement and progress towards the implementation of the mono floral standards

The Council had received correspondence, the points raised were noted.

The Council discussed the use of a decision tree when applying the standard. It will need to be tailored to meet the “wholly and mainly” Codex requirements (minimum of claimed honey type is 51%). The decisions would be based on the premise that the floral type is first step. Then specific properties required by market become relevant. It was agreed that strong rules are required to underpin the credibility of the standards.

There was discussion about the use of accredited laboratories because they have more credibility. The accuracy of test results become less relevant if there is a large margin above or below the standard. The credibility of the accredited laboratory becomes more important when the results are close to the standard or when a dispute arises.

The Council agreed to proceed with an independent statistical analysis of the available industry laboratory data. Industry members who measured the standard parameters would be asked to submit any results they had for different floral types.

Stephen Franks advised that the Manuka Group has not been addressing the same issues as the BPSC. The Group had been working on addressing the international scene and like the BPSC would expect the domestic requirements to follow. The working group expects to get honey included under Horticulture Exports Act (HEA). Honey will stay within Animal Products Act (APA), but HEA could provide for an export licensing regime for manuka honey (or other honeys if the industry so desired). Industry consultation about HEA proposals was discussed. The amendment is based on a general definition of “honey” rather than make subsequent amendments for floral types other than manuka as they are added to the regime.

A ring sampling programme that would include New Zealand and at least two overseas laboratories was discussed. Certification accompanied by claims will need to be supported by documentation of laboratory results which need to be robust and calibrated. Samples from industry will be selected to cover Manuka and clover.

The timeline towards implementation in the report which had been published in October 2009 issue of The Beekeeper was discussed. The statistical analysis and laboratory work would be underway for the next BPSC meeting. It was agreed that other activities such as industry training would be timed for mid 2010. It was still envisaged that the standard would be mandatory and operational by the 1st of October, 2010.

BPSC constitution and membership

Correspondence from the NBA requested information about the constitution and structure was discussed. Communication to and from the NBA was seen to be important. The Honey Packers circulate the synopsis of each meeting which has also been published in The Beekeeper. Communication to and from nominating organisations via members on the BPSC was accepted practice.

Tutin review update

The NZFSA reported that findings from the toxicological studies to date did not appear to require any significant changes. Consultation on the tutin standard would be targeted mid-year, either side of the industry conferences. Some further survey data would be sought, especially in the north of the North Island. The collection of other information was expected to be on-going.

Pyrrolizidine Alkaloids

Discussions at Apimondia had highlighted concerns and potential risks. The Council agreed to keep this issue under review.

Residue Testing

Mike Clear presented the 2008-09 report and draft 2009-10 Notice. A report will be made available for publication. The 2009 programme had given excellent results.

Transport RCS

There was discussion about the registration of carriers. It is possible that the carrier could become covered by a producer's RMP. An amendment to the RMP will need to be notified and records of subcontractors kept. If a beekeeper without an RMP carts their own product after extraction, they will need to be appropriately registered under the RCS or operate under a RMP (whether their own transport RMP, or the RMP of the extractor or receiving premises). Compliance is required by 31 March 2010.

The Council considered a draft Transfer Statement and gave feedback on the proposed changes.

The Council agreed that communication was very important to ensure that the industry was well informed.

Export ED verification

Concerns about the timing and availability of export certification were discussed. When urgent certification was required, the verifier should be notified accordingly.

Labelling requirements in relation to export certification

The Council discussed labeling of product to meet overseas market requirements. There appears to be some conflicts between the New Zealand domestic requirements and requirements of importing countries that need to be resolved.

Drums and IBC's to the EU

The product contact surface needs to meet the standard (EU Directive). The history of use needs to be documented for the EU and in fact for all market use. Drums should not be used if their history was unknown and that are not proven to be fit for purpose. It was noted that there were reused drums being recycled and that those that do not meet the standards should

be removed from circulation. Every purchaser should receive a letter from the supplying company that confirms the compliance of the drums.

EU OMAR

The BPSC is concerned that product handling and storage does not meet the EU requirements. Those who do not meet the standards should receive non-compliances and be required to remedy the situation. It was noted that EU listed premises require an RMP. The RMP documents where drums should be kept and how they are managed.

EU Honey mobile extraction

The Council confirmed that mobile extraction will be permitted only where they are fully enclosed. The BPSC agreed that it is very feasible to fully enclose a mobile unit.

Liaison with Bee Product RMP holders

The Council agreed that it should communicate more closely with the RMP holders and that it would be advantageous both ways. It noted that a number of RMP holders were not members of any industry organisation. Meeting summaries and other specific advice would be sent out to these industry members. An e-mail list and where necessary a mailing list would be established.

Organic Beekeepers

The Council discussed concerns about the need to feed sugar and clarified that it is permissible to feed sugar under difficult environmental conditions. It noted that organic beekeeping is about sustainable maintenance and feeding of reserves. The Council advised NZFSA that raising queens requires that sugar needs to be fed to stimulate queen production.