



Joint Industry/MPI Manuka Honey Science Steering Group

Meeting Minutes

Date	19 February 2019
Participants	<i>Industry:</i> Tony Wright, ApiNZ Board director; Karin Kos, Chief Executive, ApiNZ; John Rawcliffe, UMFHA; Ian Fletcher, NZ Beekeeping Inc (by phone) <i>MPI:</i> Steve Hathaway, Director Science and Risk Assessment; Claire McDonald, Manager, Operational Research.
Location	Hamilton

Agenda

Chair (In rotation): Steve Hathaway MPI

1. Current science issues: MPI and industry
2. Work programme; update and review
 - Reference collection pilot survey
 - Sampling project
 - Stability project
3. Technical aspects of the reference collection pilot trial
 - collection protocol for honey sampled directly from the hives at a apiary sites and from drums of honey
 - traceability information needed for all honey samples
 - survey methods to quantify the flowering plant species at an apiary site
 - extraction and sub-sampling specifications for honey samples
 - laboratory testing requirements
4. Performance of the regulatory definition: Northland
5. C4 sugars: Investigation and mitigation
6. Terms of Reference and MHSSG participation
7. MHSSG representation at international meetings 2018 / 2019
8. Other business

Key Discussion Points and Actions

1. The **emerging issue of note** since the last meeting in Nov 2018 is concerns raised by Northland beekeepers regarding the MPI mānuka honey definition (see item 4).

2. Work programme:

- a. Pilot Trial for NZ Honey Reference Collection

MPI is leading a trial to establish a New Zealand honey reference collection. The trial involves collecting honeys from across 5 regions of New Zealand and will predominantly be focussed on mānuka honey (monofloral and multifloral mānuka). The trial is progressing well with protocols drafted and honey samples being collected:

- the protocol for collecting the honeys includes sampling honey directly from the hives at an apiary site and from drums of honey. Traceability information collected for each sample will be assessed to determine the range of information needed to accompany a honey if it was included in a reference collection.
- a botanical survey quantifying the flowering plant species at an apiary site is underway
- an extraction, subsampling and storage protocol for the honeys is being trialled. This includes determining the time and temperature for extracting the honeys, how to monitor the extraction and the number of subsamples to take.

Collection of honey samples and surveying of sites is due to finish by the end of March 2019. Once all honeys are subsampled they will be tested for a range of parameters. The testing battery is still to be finalised and will include the 5 manuka honey markers, HMF, moisture, Brix and potentially a test to determine sugar adulteration.

b. Sampling project

The MPI-led project is progressing as planned with an industry survey of current sampling practices being carried out. The results will be used to help design a study to further investigate the factors that can influence the representativeness of a sample and interpretation of test results.

Action: MPI to identify an appropriate forum to present the summary results of the industry survey to a wider group and provide opportunity for feedback (**w/c 4 Mar 2019**).

c. Stability project

The stability project, to be carried out in collaboration with FERA in the UK, is in the planning phase with selection of the appropriate samples and the number of samples being finalised with the UK researchers. A draft protocol for the work is being finalised.

Action: MHSSG and industry to continue work with FERA and University of York on finalising the protocol.

3. Technical specifications for the reference collection pilot trial

Discussions were held on clarifying detailed technical specifications of the reference collection trial for all members of the MHSSG. Industry will present a paper showcasing the establishment of a national reference collection at a conference in China in March.

Action: MPI to provide a detailed technical description of the protocol to the MHSSG

4. Performance of the regulatory definition

MPI and industry have received information from industry stakeholders in Northland that some honeys expected to be manuka honey are not meeting the definition due to their levels of 2-methoxyacetophenone being too low for the monofloral manuka definition and levels of 3-phenyllactic acid being too high for the multifloral manuka definition. The MHSSG identified the need for more accurate quantification of the scale of this problem in Northland and are exploring scientific approaches to gain more insight into this (regional) aspect of performance of the manuka honey definition.

Action: MPI to develop additional communication materials on this issue (**by next meeting**)

5. C4 sugars

ApiNZ presented a new proposal to investigate C4 sugar testing and explore the potential for amendments to the existing test methods.

Action: The MHSSG will provide feedback for the next ApiNZ Standards, Compliance and Regulatory Focus Group meeting.

6. Terms of Reference and MHSSG participation

While the MHSSG has agreed goals and objectives for its work, there is no formal ToR. As an informal, self-funded group, the MHSSG is progressing a significant work programme in an effective and efficient manner. Further, the Group has no decision-making function in regard to the honey industry. On this basis, it was agreed that a formal ToR was not necessary at this time.

Expanding the membership of the MHSSG was discussed. Noting that the MHSSG will draw on scientific expertise for specific projects as and when required, it was agreed that both strategic and experienced technical perspectives are important attributes for potential future members. If the MHSSG expanded, a formal ToR may be needed.

7. Representation at international meetings

The MHSSG agreed the importance of jointly ensuring the scientific credibility and trust in the NZ regulatory programme and demonstrating the value of the ongoing joint industry and government science programme. The MHSSG have jointly prepared a paper for China Bee Products Industry Conference in March 2019.

Action: MHSSG members to agree international priorities for representation at the next meeting.

Minutes drafted by MPI

4/3/19