



MPI Mānuka Honey Science Programme

November 2015 update



The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) is leading and managing a science programme to develop a robust science-based definition for monofloral mānuka honey to ensure consumers, overseas regulators, and industry can continue to have confidence in the safety and integrity of mānuka honey.

There is currently no agreed scientific definition for monofloral mānuka honey, so this work will provide clarity about the characteristics of mānuka honey when it is sold as a food.

Once a scientific definition has been finalised, MPI will make changes to the regulations so mānuka honey that is sold as food can be checked and verified to ensure it is accurately labelled.

Having a robust scientific definition for mānuka honey will also help overseas regulators to be confident that mānuka honey imported from New Zealand is verified and authentic.

About the programme

To address the issues and risks surrounding mānuka honey authenticity, MPI has committed significant resource to lead a science programme to support the development of a robust scientific definition for mānuka honey.

We have a team dedicated to the science programme that oversees the programme's design and undertakes additional and independent technical reviews of all results produced.

Results from the programme are produced by a consortium of specialist service providers who are contracted by MPI.

We will also continue to work with industry to seek their feedback and ensure programme outcomes are fit-for-purpose and practical, as well as engage with key overseas regulators to assist with implementation and uptake.

The programme, which began in 2014, is due for completion in 2016 and has two phases.



Photos: Dr Matt Buys, Scion

Want to find out more?

If you have any questions or would like more information about the MPI Manuka Honey Science Programme, please contact us at manuka.honey@mpi.govt.nz

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Phase 1: September 2014 – November 2015

- ✓ Phase 1 focused on identifying biological characteristics that are unique to the mānuka plant (*Leptospermum scoparium*).
The characteristics we are interested in come from either the pollen or the nectar of the mānuka plant.
- ✓ We have collected a reference set of plant samples and so far, thanks to industry support, we have collected approximately 160 single apiary-sourced honey samples of varying floral types.
- ✓ The plant and honey samples are being tested using a variety of techniques including DNA and chemical-based test methods. These methods will be validated both in New Zealand and overseas.
- ✓ Test results are currently being analysed to work out which characteristics will be further investigated and validated.

Phase 2: November 2015 – December 2016

- ✓ Phase 2 focuses on the validation of characteristics, test methods and the development of the scientific definition for mānuka honey.
- ✓ Phase 2 continues the work from Phase 1 to collect plant and honey samples.
- ✓ The validation process will consider the ease of being able to share and transfer skills and knowledge, testing costs, turnaround time and acceptability by the international scientific community.
- ✓ The definition will be developed following extensive analysis and interpretation of results at the end of Phase 2.
- ✓ We anticipate that more than one characteristic will be used within the definition for mānuka honey.
- ✓ The outcomes of the programme will be published following an international peer review.

