

Mānuka Honey Labelling Guidelines Work Group and Science Work Group Meeting Summary

Thursday 10 April 2014, MPI Auckland Biosecurity Centre, Auckland Airport

Chair: Scott Gallacher (guidelines group) Ian Ferguson (science group)

In attendance: See Appendix 1

Nutrition, Health and Related Claims

MPI presented on the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code and the requirements of Standard 1.2.7 on Nutrition, Health and Related Claims, which come into effect from January 2016.

The work group noted that under Standard 1.2.7 (and transitional standard 1.1.A.2) no therapeutic claims can be made on food products and, on the basis of existing information to hand, this means that no references to 'activity', 'total activity', 'total peroxide activity', 'peroxide activity' and 'non-peroxide activity' are permitted on mānuka honey labels.

It is important to note that these requirements also apply to associated advertising, as any statement, information, designs or representations prohibited by the Code from being included on a label, cannot be used in advertising. The group acknowledged that many mānuka honey businesses will need to adjust labelling to comply with these requirements, and should begin doing so as soon as possible.

The group also noted that the labelling guidelines will include information and guidance for the industry on how to ensure that their products comply with the legislation.

Mānuka Honey Definition

MPI presented some 'strawman' options for defining mānuka honey. The working group discussed these and the following points were noted:

- The industry is working together well, and is making good progress towards a definition that will have consensus support and form an integral part of the interim guidelines to be released in June 2014;
- The definition will be a starting point and will evolve as further science is available;
- Work group members stated that the name mānuka is used for both *leptospermum scoparium* and *kunzea*.
- The group noted that, at present, there is not a robust and easy-to-implement method for distinguishing between *leptospermum scoparium* and *kunzea*. If such a method becomes

available, the guideline definition may need to evolve to address this issue, if it is deemed necessary.

- The definition will likely include a series of gateways for a honey to pass through to be labelled 'mānuka honey'. A first gate will differentiate mānuka honey from other monofloral honeys (for example by colour, conductivity). Additional gateways will further specify the properties that characterise mānuka and exclude other similar honeys. Possible exclusion criteria may also be applied (i.e. a honey could not be labelled mānuka if it met the definition for another type of monofloral honey);
- There is a potential pathway for honey that does not meet the monofloral mānuka honey definition to be labelled 'multifloral mānuka' (or similar words) depending on its characteristics. The guidelines will not prescribe how multifloral mānuka is marketed and it is up to producers which term they use to describe their product. However, all honeys must meet legislative requirements, be true to label and not be misleading;
- The aim is to have a guideline that provides clear information for the industry and consumers, and that is practical and feasible to implement. MPI will be working with the industry on the implementation, including an education programme to make sure that all in the industry are aware of the implications and how the definition can be applied to a honey label;
- MPI is reviewing information about fraudulent activity and misleading claims on mānuka honey labels and will be looking to take action where there is sufficient evidence and information. MPI welcomes any additional information from the industry of honeys that are not labelled appropriately.

Science Group Notes

Brief Update on the short-term science projects.

Most of these projects are now underway:

- Standard pollen analysis on the 50 proof-of concept samples
- Quantitative PCR analysis on the 50 proof-of concept samples
- C3:C4 sugars on the 50 proof-of concept samples
- Conductance on the 50 proof-of concept samples
- Moisture on the 50 proof-of concept samples
- Classifynder analysis on 16 samples

The 50 samples will also be analysed for MGO, DHA, HMF and chemical profiling.

Database Assembly and Analysis

The group agreed that it would be most desirable to:

(a) assemble a database of what is known about various honey samples held by different labs and honey packers; and

(b) engage some statisticians (possibly from within MPI) to work alongside members of the science team. The MPI science team will determine what analysis would be most useful to inform the science group, and perform the analysis.

ACTION: MPI will canvass the various labs and honey packers to see what is available, and arrange statistical analysis.

Discussion on Parameters

The group discussed the ability of the various parameters described in the strawman to provide sufficient discriminating power, including:

- Colour – discussion on how impacts of age and heating affect the honey colour
- HMF levels – a suggestion that high levels of HMF (eg >40mg/kg may indicate the honey has been overheated)
- Taste, smell, aroma – discussion on how definitive the descriptors need to be, given there is a large variation and potential for changes over time -
- Thixotropy - this is worth considering further. Thixotropy covers a large range; high MGO tends to be associated with high thixotropy
- Sugar ratios-consider adding C3:C4 ratios as another parameter. The ratio of glucose to fructose in honey may also be useful.
- MG -
- Biochemical markers
- Pollen – discussion on the reference absolute mānuka pollen numbers as well as mānuka pollen percentages

Potential Long-Term Projects

- Scale-up of short-term proof of concept projects where appropriate
- Chemical profiling – need descriptive compounds; targeted methods that are quicker and cheaper; determine what regional differences are and differences due to storage- find compounds not affected by region/ storage/temperature.
- Assemble a library of 100% manuka honeys (however 100% is defined)
- Bee-cage experiments to determine plant-pollen-nectar-bee-honey relationship
- Determine whether adulteration can be detected by looking for contaminants in the DHA

Next Meeting: Wednesday 14 May, Wellington

Appendix 1: Attendees

Guidelines work group

Scott Gallacher (MPI) - Chair

Victor Goldsmith

John Hartnell

Moirra Haddrell

Pam Flack

Steve Lyttle

Graham Cammell

Kerry Paul

Lisa Winthrop (MPI)

Science Work Group

Ian Ferguson (MPI) – Chair

Peter Bray

Dr. Terry Braggins

Dr Mark Goodwin

Dr Marilyn Manley-Harris

Apologies: Dr. Karyne Rogers, Dr. Mandy Suddes, Dr Ralf Schlothauer