

Organic Honey Production



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Can We Produce Organic Honey???

- National Honey Board lists 33 organic honey suppliers in the US
- I only found a few that were producing organic honey in the U.S.
- The rest were importing from New Zealand, Brazil, Mexico, Zambia, Canada, Argentina, Vietnam, China, Australia, Chile, Peru, etc.

Domestic Organic Honey Producers: Examples

- Marshall's Farm Natural Honey in CA – hives managed in wild, natural lands
- Johnston Farm in Minnesota
- Dutch Gold in Pennsylvania



Organic Food Production Act

- 1990 Federal law that governs the marketing of organically produced agricultural products
- OFPA required the USDA and the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) to develop the certification program known as the National Organic Program

Organic Food Production Act

- NOP developed national standards for the production, handling, and labeling of organic agricultural products
- Also developed a National List of substances either approved or prohibited from use in organic production and handling

Bottom Line

- You may not market your honey as “organic” unless your operation is certified or you qualify for an exemption
- **Exemption:** small farmers who sell agricultural products as organic but have a gross annual income from organic sales of \$5,000 or less are exempt from certification BUT must still comply with organic production, handling, and labeling requirements

The “O” Word

- Knowingly selling or labeling a product as organic, in violation of any provision of OFPA or NOP requirement, may result in a fine of up to \$10,000 per violation



Organic Apiculture Standard

- Honey bees are considered livestock and are covered by the provisions of the OFPA
- NOSB Apiculture Task Force was charged with the development of organic apiculture standards – they submitted their standards in 2001
- The standards are still only recommendations made to the USDA and will not become official until they are approved and adopted by the USDA
- It is likely that the USDA will adopt the standards with little or no changes

Organic Apiculture Standard

- Products that are to be sold or labeled as organic must be from hives which have been under continuous organic management for no less than 270 days prior to the removal of the products from the hive
- If a prohibited material has been used in or on the hive prior to the 270 day transition, the producer must replace the hive's foundation with foundation made from organic wax and remove those products to be sold as organic, prior to the start of the transition period

Organic Apiculture Plan

- A producer of organic apiculture products must develop an organic apiculture plan in accordance with the provisions in the standard

Organic Apiculture Plan Must:

- (1) Contain a map of the forage zone which shows the location of the hives, the location of organic and wild land, and the location of all non-organic areas
- (2) Describe the quantity of organic and/or wild forage to be provided per colony, including the type or types of forage, approximate bloom period, forage density, competing species density, honeybee colony density, colony health, colony strength, topography, and climatic conditions
- (3) Describe the water sources available in the forage zone
- (4) List all sanitary landfills, incinerators, sewage treatment facilities, power plants, golf courses, towns or cities, land to which prohibited materials are applied, and all other sources of potential contamination located in the forage zone
- (5) For all operations, including split operations, list and describe the management practices used to prevent commingling and contamination, including measures to prevent commingling resulting from bee drift and robbing

Recordkeeping

- A producer of organic apiculture products must maintain records in accordance with the standard

Land and Forage

- Hives must be maintained on land that is managed organically in accordance with the provisions in the standard
- Hives can not be maintained in an area where a significant risk of contamination by prohibited materials exist within a 4 mile radius of the apiary

Forage

- The producer must provide bees with forage that is managed organically in accordance with the provisions in the standard
- The producer of an organic apiculture operation may allow bees from their operation to forage on non-organically managed land when adequate forage from organically managed land has been provided



Feed

- Producers **may** provide supplemental feed from organic honey, organic sugar syrup, and/or pollen substitutes and supplements that are allowed under the standard
- **However**, the producer must **not** provide organic sugar syrup less than 30 days prior to the harvest of honey

Approved Hive Construction Materials

- Hives must be made of natural materials, including wood and metal
- Outside hive surfaces may be painted with non-lead based paints
- Plastic foundation may be used if dipped in organic beeswax and mounted in a wooden frame

Required Preventive Health Care Practices

- Selection of bee stocks, hive densities, and colony locations appropriate to site-specific conditions and resistant to prevalent diseases and pests
- Introduction of replacement bees which are from organic sources or from non-organic sources (but the replacement bees must be managed organically for at least 60 days prior to the removal of organic apiculture products from the hive)
- Maintenance of adequate supplies of honey and pollen in the hive, including leaving hives with reserves of honey and pollen sufficient for the colony to survive the dormancy period
- Use of foundation wax not contaminated with diseases or pests

Required Preventive Health Care Practices

- Destruction of equipment and bees contaminated with disease or pests
- Use of management methods or modified equipment to control pests and diseases
- Use of therapeutic applications of non-synthetic materials to control pests, parasites, and diseases (as long as materials are not prohibited)
- Use of therapeutic applications of synthetic materials (as long as materials are allowed)

The Producer Must Not:

- Accept the presence of pests, parasites, or disease without initiating efforts to restore the health of the colony
- Use synthetic materials not listed as allowed
- Use non-synthetic materials prohibited
- Use lumber treated with synthetic materials not listed as allowed or non-synthetic materials prohibited for hive construction materials

The Producer Must Not:

- Use synthetic materials or non-synthetic materials prohibited in bee smokers
- Annually destroy bee colonies following honey flows
- Rotate hives between organic and non-organic management
- Sell apiculture products as organic if they contain a residue of a prohibited material greater than 5 percent of the Environmental Protection Agency's tolerance for the specific residue detected
- Label honey as "organic raw honey" if it has been heated, filtered using filter elements smaller than 200 microns, or if diatomaceous earth has been added to separate seed crystals from the honey

Materials the NOSB Recommends for Review

- Essential oils* – N – to control tracheal mites including: menthol, cinnamon, eucalyptus, spearmint, wintergreen, thyme, and camphor
- Vegetable shortening* – S – to control tracheal mites
- Folic acid* – S – to control Varroa mites
- Formic acid – S – to control Varroa mites
- Lactic acid* – N, S – to control Varroa mites

* *These materials may be used after the last honey harvest of the season and must be discontinued 30 days before the addition of honey supers*

Materials the NOSB Recommends for Review

- Acetic acid – S – to disinfect empty combs which have been exposed to European foulbrood, Nosema, or Amoeba Disease
- Carbon dioxide – S – to control wax moth
- Oxytetracycline (Terramycin) – S - for treatment of American foulbrood (AFB) in apiaries in which the disease has been diagnosed; beekeepers may not make routine, prophylactic applications of oxytetracycline in apiaries in which there has been no confirmation of the presence of AFB

So...Can We Produce Certified Organic Honey in North Carolina?



Probably Not, but...

- Beekeepers can use organic practices
- You can discuss your practices with your customers – tell them how you manage your hives
- Just do not use the “O” word unless you are certified organic or under the exemption and following the organic standards!

Resources

www.growingsmallfarms.org

Click on Production, then Beekeeping