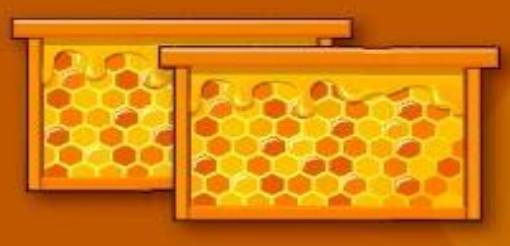
Organic Apiculture

Currently the growth of organic production owes to the preference for consuming organic products. Consumers are opting for taking home products free of chemicals that have implemented environmentally friendly practices in their production processes.

To provide assurances of the foregoing and to maintain the preference of the consumer, beekeepers carry out activities at the many production stages, to demonstrate compliance with the Organic Product Law. Prominent among these activities, traceability is used to supervise the organic integrity of the production chain as follows.

STEP 1. APIARY

Bees collect nectar and pollen within the foraging area and transport them to their hive to produce organic honey. The organic operator puts an identification number in every hive, and such number is recorded in the logs used to keep control and identify, at the end of the productive chain, the hive of origin of the honey that will be transported to the collection center. Additionally, the beekeeper records the consumables used for feeding or the veterinary treatments required to prevent or treat any pest harming the bees.



STEP 2. COLLECTION

Before transporting the honey to the collection center, the beekeeper removes the frames or raisers (honeycombs) from the hives full of honey, and carefully scrapes the surface to remove the wax with which the bees have sealed the cells, in order to get the organic honey. Subsequently, the beekeeper makes a note in the log and/or records of the hive number from which the honey was collected. At all times handling the hive, the beekeeper prevents any contamination risks that could harm the organic integrity of the honey.

STEP 3. EXTRACTION

To extract the honey, the organic operator places the frames or raisers in a centrifuge at room temperature. After the centrifugation cycle has finished, the honey is collected and stored in drums. Each drum is labeled with the name of the beekeeper or organic operation and the number of the hive from which the honey was extracted, and the address of the apiary, for traceability purposes, in order to guarantee the source and destination of the organic honey.

STEP 4. REPOSE

Upon delivery to a regional or temporary collection center, the organic honey is left to repose the time necessary for the impurities to rise to the surface. At this point there is a risk of contamination or loss of organic integrity since here are gathered drums from different beekeepers. Therefore, the drums must be labeled and the amount of organic honey for every organic production unit must be recorded, in order to correlate each drum with its corresponding supplier. At this point, it is important to specify that the organic integrity of the honey that enters or exits the repose stage to continue with its process depends on the preventive measures adopted by the beekeeper to preserve the traceability of the honey.

STEP 5. PROCESSING

The honey drums exit the repose stage and are moved to processing plants for filtering, to remove any physical residues. A number of quality tests can be carried out at this stage to know some of its characteristics, such as humidity or sugar content, among others, or some laboratory tests can be performed to guarantee the absence of forbidden substances for organic production.

The results obtained and the information previously recorded will allow the timely identification of the source of the contaminated honey batch and the production unit to which it belongs, to carry out the appropriate actions to prevent the contamination of the remaining honey, and to uphold the reliability of the source of the honey that will reach the consumers' tables.

STEP 6. BOTTLING

The organic honey is bottled, for domestic or international commercialization. At this stage, it is essential to put in the label or packaging the batch number and organic operation code, to preserve the preventive measures that will guarantee at all times the integrity of the organic honey. This means maintaining enough information to enable the traceability, from the bottling process backwards, to know the source of the hive from which the organic honey, that later will be commercialized through the apicultural producers' group, was extracted.

In the end, the organic operator is responsible for implementing organic practices, reinforced with good primary production practices in the handling and bottling of organic honey. These measures will help to reduce physical, chemical or microbiological contamination risks and preserve the trust and preference of the consumers.

Regarding this subject, we suggest querying the Good Honey Production Practices at the following link: Manual_de_BPPLen_la_Producci_n_de_Miel_2019.pdf (wwvv.gob.mx).

To read more about organic apiculture practices, query the Subchapter II of the Guidelines Agreement at the following link: 2020-06-08_Acuerdo_por_el_que_se_modifican...el_cliverso_por_el_que_se_dan_a_conocer_los_Lineamientos_para_la_ Operaci_n_Organica.pdf (www.gob.mx).

How to look over the handling of the organic honey from my apiary?

To start, you must have a good control of your hives: identify them with a specific number and record the consumables and handling of each hive.

When extracting the honey, label the container with the data from the apiary and the date, and do not forget to write down the hives from which you extracted the honey. Verify that the label is properly affixed and there is no risk of detachment.

When transporting the honey to a collection center verify that the individual in charge records in the log all the data from the label affixed in every container, as well as the amount of honey coming from your apiary, and write down the code with which your organic honey will be registered. Check that your containers are placed in the same area.

Ask to which processing and bottling plant your honey will be transported. At the plant, verify that the amount of honey received from your apiary corresponds with your records, and that the identification codes appear in both the logs and the containers, which will make possible to know the origin of the organic honey.

To finish, check that the label or packaging has the batch number and organic operation code. If you detect any irregularity, REPORT them at the SENASICA's webpage: https://www.gob.mx/ senasica/acciones-y-programas/queja-o-denuncia