

Government Relations Update



by Troy Fore, ABF Director of Government Relations



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There are a lot of undercurrents in the honey market today that could have long-term effects. I have just become aware of some of this and even though my knowledge is limited, I wanted to pass on what I have learned – or, at least, have been told by responsible people.

Item 1 – Some otherwise respected honey packers are packing a product containing honey cut with corn syrup and/or other cheap sweeteners. Some is being packed for retail sale, some for ingredient use. The products are legal and correctly labeled, but they clearly undercut the market for pure honey. Why is this happening? The

packers say competition forced them into it. Customers demanded it. They also say this is a separate market from the pure honey market.

Item 2 – We have been told that a honey packer – one of the most-respected honey labels in America in terms of purity and care for what’s in their packages – has been importing massive amounts of a product that is labeled in China as being less than 50 percent honey “for bee feed.” At least that’s what the labels say. Therefore, it escapes the anti-dumping duty (as much as \$2.63/kg), not to mention the National Honey Board penny. You have to wonder what a squeaky-clean honey packer would do with so much “not-pure honey.” Apparently, what goes into their plant as “not-pure honey” seemingly comes out the other end as U.S. Grade A 100-Percent Pure Honey.

Item 3 – U.S. honey imports from China have plummeted. This year, through September, they have amounted to less than 135,000 lbs. Assuming the final quarter will add 25 percent to that, the 2009 imports can be expected to total about 180,000 lbs. Compare that with the totals of honey imported from China in the past four years:

- 2005: 60.41 million lbs.
- 2006: 74.79 million lbs.
- 2007: 38.65 million lbs.
- 2008: 29.78 million lbs.
- 2009: 134,672 lbs. (January – September)

Meanwhile, honey imports have soared from certain countries previously not known to sell honey to the United States. Some of these countries, formerly net importers of honey, are exporting more honey to the United States than they have normally. Vietnam is currently the leading U.S. honey supplier, and Indonesia, Taiwan and Malaysia are among the top 10.

ABF has not been standing on the sidelines during all this. Your association has been the leader in the effort to have FDA adopt a honey standard of identity. We made great headway in the recently-approved Ag Appropriations bill. FDA has promised Congress that they will move on this. We are working to see that this does happen.

There’s a role for you, too, in this battle. If you sell to packers, you should make yourself aware of their purchasing and marketing practices. If you don’t like

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| 2008 U.S. Honey Imports From All Countries <i>In Metric Tons (Metric Ton = 2,204.6 lbs.)</i> | | |
|--|----------|----------|
| Country | 2008 YTD | 2009 YTD |
| Vietnam | 14,486 | 12,412 |
| Canada | 13,887 | 6,405 |
| India | 11,763 | 11,130 |
| Brazil | 9,187 | 13,211 |
| China | 7,207 | 20 |
| Argentina | 7,695 | 7,737 |
| Malaysia | 2,602 | 4,418 |
| Taiwan | 2,196 | 3,815 |
| Russia | 3,143 | 46 |
| Indonesia | 1,393 | 3,502 |
| Mexico | 1,257 | 1,144 |
| Thailand | 899 | 1,439 |
| New Zealand | 354 | 607 |
| Mongolia | 327 | 618 |
| Pakistan | 152 | 96 |
| Subtotal | 76,550 | 66,599 |
| All Other | 2,173 | 1,710 |

Source: USDA





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what you learn, tell the packer. You can also take your product elsewhere. Tell your Congressman that we need better methods of ensuring the purity of honey being imported and being sold in our markets. Pick up suspect samples and send them for testing through the ABF's Honey Defense Fund (see www.abfnet.org or contact me for information). We have overcome difficult challenges before; we can overcome this one.

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The following ABF members contributed to the ABF Legislative Fund during the months of October and November 2009. These donations enable us to carry out the legislative initiatives that will benefit ABF members and the American beekeeping industry.

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