



bulletin board

Authentic New Zealand manuka honey, or not?

New Zealand finally introduced legislation to protect against fake manuka honey in December 2017. The new law requires products made in New Zealand and exported with Official Assurances after 5 February 2018 to comply. From September, all products labelled as manuka honey must also comply if intended for export.

The new legislation is a culmination of new natural markers to label the product either monofloral or multifloral manuka:

Monofloral:

3-Phenylactic acid $\geq 400\text{mg/kg}$
2-Methoxyacetophenone $\geq 5\text{mg/kg}$
2-Methoxybenzoic acid $\geq 1\text{mg/kg}$
4-Hydroxyphenylactic $\geq 1\text{mg/kg}$
DNA from manuka pollen $< \text{Cq36}$



Rashda Ali

is general manager of Comvita Europe and an HFMA council member

ers to check that products leaving New Zealand have been tested, and retailers can now ask for the test certificates.

What does this mean for rating systems? The New Zealand Government is allowing producers to continue with their own rating systems,

Multifloral:

3-Phenylactic acid $\geq 20\text{mg/kg}$
2-Methoxyacetophenone $\geq 1\text{mg/kg}$
As monofloral
As monofloral

Confused? Many retailers are. Since the new legislation has come into place, retailers are asking if there is a new grading system. Sorry, no. Can you tell on the label if the product complies? That's a no too! The new law does give an opportunity for retailers to gain assurances from their suppliers

as long as they are defensible and have some scientific evidence. New Zealand only has two common rating systems, while the UK has at least five, and it is these myriad systems that have allowed the UK to sell 10,000 tonnes of manuka annually, when New Zealand only produces 1,700 tonnes.

An important point not to be missed in all this is that the consumer is better off. Products which meet the official monofloral manuka standard are genuine and are backed by the New Zealand Government.

Of course, there have always been many honest producers supplying the genuine article, but now we have the means to prove this at both trade and consumer level.

The onus is now on the retailers to work with their suppliers. This can clear the path for retailers, if they want to be seen as ethical and transparent, to implement the new legislation. One retailer has already taken this stance in its US and Canadian stores: Costco has selected four suppliers to provide them quality UMF-graded monofloral manuka honey. Can UK retailers now follow suit?

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The HFMA's strength comes from the breadth and diversity of its membership, and the passion of its council, members and secretariat. There are countless reasons to join the HFMA, but for ten of the best, visit our website at www.hfma.co.uk/membership.

News ...

Potential food supplements breakthrough for psychosis sufferers

Encouraging results from a clinical trial conducted in Melbourne have revealed that nutrients found in food might help reduce the symptoms of psychotic illness when used in the early stages of treatment. The review, published in *Early Intervention in Psychiatry*, found that certain nutrients such as taurine – an amino acid found in foods such as shellfish and turkey – as well as antioxidant supplements like vitamin C may be effective when used in conjunction with standard treatment. The study is the first evaluation of nutrient supplementation trials in 'first-episode psychosis'.

Lead author Dr Firth said of the findings: "Certainly, there is early indication that certain nutrients may be beneficial – not to replace standard treatment, but as an 'add-on' treatment for some patients."

SWEET TALK

With the recent introduction of the Soft Drinks Industry Levy, known colloquially as the 'sugar tax', the amount of sugar in the foods and food supplements we consume, more broadly speaking, has come under increasing scrutiny.

The European Consumer Organization BEUC has in recent times called on the European Commission to tackle unhealthy food and beverage products that are still making health-related claims, launching a new

campaign denouncing the Commission's 'long-standing failure [to] clear the market of bogus food claims'.

The natural products industry has experienced the sharp end of this increased scrutiny lately, with a number of media investigations into the levels of sugar in chewable vitamin 'gummy' supplements, aimed predominantly at children. Within the landscape of fizzy drinks, microwave meals and sugar-coated cereals, criticism

of the sugar content of supplements can certainly be regarded as misdirected. Nevertheless, as an industry intent on maintaining the highest standards, serving as an example for others to follow, the natural products sector must continue to act as a beacon for healthy living in the UK. As the voice of the industry, the HFMA continues to advocate for the overwhelmingly positive effects which the products our members manufacture bring to British consumers.



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