

JG/ZK

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F.E.E.D.M. Statement

The need of harmonisation of analytical methods for honey authenticity

F.E.E.D.M. represents the interests of the European honey packers and distributors. The priority of the association is to defend and promote honey as a pure and natural product. F.E.E.D.M. supports good apiculture practices and aims at improving the quality standards of the product. The members of F.E.E.D.M., being from 19 countries, commit themselves to the integrity and quality of the products, which are subject to their business. The members of F.E.E.D.M. represent about 90% of the total European honey import as well as a significant share of traders and packers of European produced honey.

Honey is a most valuable natural product and is one of the most traditional foods in our nutrition. The legal basis for honey is the EU Honey Directive and also the Codex Alimentarius Standard for Honey. According to the EU Honey Directive, honey is exclusively a product of the honey bee *Apis Mellifera* without any additives.

To our sectors greatest concern, there are repeated attempts to adulterate honey by, amongst others, addition of exogenous sugars. The development of additives for honey adulteration is so dynamic that they are permanently modified and professionalised. Accordingly, the analytical methods have to be improved continuously and adapted to the state of the art. Specialised laboratories of our own Technical Working Group (TWG) have closely collaborated to improve analytical methods in order to systematically detect honey adulteration with exogenous sugars.

Due to the absence of an official guidance for honey, the TWG runs its own ring tests according to a coordinated authenticity testing protocol. The results as well as possible testing improvements and innovations are discussed regularly by the experts to come to a standardisation useful for the harmonisation of the test methods for control. After issuing a first technical Report about honey adulteration testing, the European Joint Research Centre (JRC) organized a round table on honey authentication in 2018 with stakeholders of the honey supply chain from all over the EU in order to develop solutions to fight honey fraud. Since then, members of the TWG have been involved in the European Committee for Standardisation. Most recently, a draft for the standardisation of the LC-HRMS method (prEN 17958) was submitted to the first international voting stage at CEN (European Committee for Standardisation) level.

However, commonly used authenticity methods are not officially recognised. The international harmonisation, validation and accreditation of these methods has not been completed. F.E.E.D.M. defends the elimination of practices that may affect the consumer's perception of the quality of honey and supports any progress that means greater reliability in detecting

possible fraud that could damage the image of the sector, provided that the methods used are validated and harmonised by the EU. In this context, EU-wide harmonised and validated test methods for ensuring the authenticity of honey would be the crucial cornerstone for providing consumers with authentic products of consistently highest quality. Additionally, it is necessary to review any regulatory actions to define authentic honey, based on the analysis results of methods which are not internationally standardised and harmonised.

A closer collaboration between F.E.E.D.M., the TWG and especially the JRC is necessary in order to achieve comparable results with the existing analytical methods and to evaluate the results uniformly. The problem of non-harmonised methods has been discussed with the EU Commission (EC) and in particular with the JRC since 2016. The TWG will continue providing essential support to finally come to a standardisation and harmonisation of the methods for official control. F.E.E.D.M. therefore considers it necessary that the EC takes the lead, to harmonise and to come up with a concrete definition of suitable analytical methods for combating honey adulteration. The time is now to intensify working together. F.E.E.D.M. will bring in all its expertise to support this EC initiative and to ensure authentic honey in the EU.

Best regards,

F.E.E.D.M.



Jeanette Gonnermann
General Secretary