

2015 October 21.

Beekeepers' Demonstration in Brussels

Hungarian beekeepers -backed with laboratory results- are unveiling the import of adulterated honey into the EU on the order of tens of thousands of tons annually.

Organized by Hungarian beekeepers, the European Union beekeepers are holding a protest in Brussels on 30 October.

The EU imports around 70 thousand tons of honey from China, and shows a strong growing tendency. Over the last year only, the amount grew by 10 thousand tons. There are strong concerns raised whether this honey is natural or adulterated. If in fact it is adulterated, this is fraud on a massive scale, misleading the consumers and causing great damage to the European beekeepers and consumers.

Unfortunately, the EU regulations help mask the forgery by allowing that the origin on mixed honeys be labeled vaguely. This weakness is exploited thoroughly. While Chinese honey is pouring into the EU in ever growing amounts, there isn't a single glass to be found that labels the honey originating in China. The chapter of the EU honey directive regarding this is legal nonsense as it states that labelling as "Blend of EU and Non EU honeys" satisfies the requirements for the designation of origin, all the while it doesn't, since the consumer will know absolutely nothing of the honey's true origin.

Facts that raise serious doubts about the authenticity of Chinese Honey:

Statistical data shows China produces as much honey as the entire American continent, with all its large honey producing states (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, USA, Canada) and the EU put together. Which is impossible as soon as you consider that more than half of China's land is made up of dry, desert areas absolutely unsuitable for bees and honey production.

Many countries have already banned the import of Chinese honey (USA, Canada, Saudi Arabia etc.) exactly for the reason that they turned out to be forged.

China is selling its honey at dumping prices. The average cost of Chinese honey imported into the EU is half of the Hungarian's export price. Ratios are similar across the board for other high quality honey exporting countries. At this price it would not be possible to produce honey whether in China or not.

It is an open secret in the international honey trade that Chinese honey is an adulterated, this is supported by the large honey laboratories' experience.

We asked for samples of Chinese honey from the EU importers that they have fully analyzed before importing. They turned out to comply with all of the regulations. We proceeded to have these samples analyzed at the University of Debrecen. The lab measured the components that are present in all honeys (flavonides, micro and macro elements, fenol components), but for which there isn't a required amount in the EU honey directive. The examinations showed that either these components are not present in the samples at all, or in quantities significantly below of natural honey's. In our opinion this is unequivocal evidence that these are artificially designed and "assembled" honeys, with consideration only for the components that are routinely controlled in the trade.

We continued by ordering the examination of honeys labeled "Blend of EU and non-EU honeys" available in Hungary's retail stores. The results from Bremen show that these are made of overwhelmingly Chinese honey. The Bremen organoleptic analysis results show they are industrial grade honey. The measurements from the University of Debrecen for these honeys showed similar anomalies as with the Chinese samples.

Chinese companies dealing with the import of quality European foods are also aware of how the Chinese honey is made. They are reluctant to buy honey from countries that import from China.

Who are the beneficiaries, and more importantly the ones responsible for this fraud?

On one hand the beneficiaries are the Chinese producers, who can continue their practices as the Chinese government does not take action against this fraud. On the other hand, the European packers that are very well aware of the origins of Chinese honey, but continue to use it. The large grocery chains are also in the know about Chinese honey. The more selective ones prohibit the suppliers from mixing Chinese into the honeys supplied to their stores. However, there are too many times greed succeeds over them.

Who is responsible for allowing the situation to degenerate so far? Brussel's bureaucracy is the first to blame, for developing such a short-sighted regulation, and not bothering to issue an in-depth examination into the state of Chinese honey import even in the face of countless alerts and an abundance of information. Of course, so are the participating businesses responsible, who are clearly aware of the issue, but still decide to put Chinese honey on the consumers' table.

Flooding our markets with Chinese honey greatly damages the Hungarian beekeepers as well. If this can not be stopped our existence will be called into question. Today, beekeeping provides in part or fully the livelihood of 15.000 beekeeping families. This is why we are going to protest in Brussels.

We have two demands:

The immediate launch of an investigation into the Chinese honey imports by the appropriate body of the EU! Take a large amount of samples from the Chinese honey imported into the EU, and subject them to a thorough scientific analysis to determine their authenticity!

Change the origin declaration requirements of the honey directive! Make it mandatory for all honeys to declare the actual country or countries of origin on the label!