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AUSSIE MANUKA HONEY TIED UP IN RED TAPE

Beekeepers in the Australian state of Queensland say government red tape is blocking the development of a potential billion-dollar Manuka honey industry.

Queensland Beekeepers Association president Robert Dewar says the problem is that in 2004 the state government converted state forests into national parks.

Despite the fact apiary sites had stood in public forests for more than 100 years, national parks ban non-native animals, including bees used for honey production. Under the change of status, beekeepers will lose access to national parks by 2024.

Recent research found Australia is home to more active native *Leptospermum* plants than New Zealand and could potentially hold stronger antibacterial properties than its famous variety across the Tasman Sea.

Dewar tells the Australian Broadcasting Corp. that apiarists are already paying hundreds of dollars in permits to use state-owned land where these shrubs are found, but not all of it is usable terrain.

Any clearing of the land is illegal under the Vegetation Management Act 1999.

Dewar says this is restricting beekeepers from setting up hives.

"We don't want to knock the trees down – that's what we depend on," he says. "All we're really looking for is a reasonably low-growth area that we can mow around, just to reduce the fire hazard is the main thing."

The beekeeping industry is mobile in nature, Dewar says, and most sites do not require more than 600 square meters (6,458 sq. ft.) of land.

The state Department of Natural Resources and Mines tells the ABC it is aware of the concerns of beekeepers and is working on an area management plan to allow apiarists to undertake small-scale clearing for hives.

Commercial beekeeper Daniel Jones tells the ABC manuka honey is a potential billion-dollar industry for Australia.

"Normal honey for us is worth ... anywhere between \$5 and \$6 a kg," he says. "If we sell privately we can get a little bit more, but the medical honey is worth up to \$30, \$40 a kg."

Dewar says he knows from talking to the beekeepers in New Zealand that they are "pretty well" at the limit of manuka honey production.

"Yet we've got it here growing in the wild, we've just got to get to it," he says.

Alan Harman

GETTING THE BUGS OUT OF CONCRETE HIVES

A South African student believes his innovative low-cost concrete hive design offers a more durable, low-cost and protective structure that will encourage more people into beekeeping.

Ivan Brown, a design student at the University of Johannesburg's Faculty of Arts, Design and Architecture, says the lightweight concrete beehive is at the heart of his Beegin project and was developed with input from beekeepers and urban farmers.

The molds that are used to create the beehives can be sold or sponsored so people can produce beehives locally for themselves and their communities, Brown says.

He exhibited his beehive model at the Design Indaba Festival in Cape Town.

The festival's emerging creatives program provides a year of support, mentorship and guidance to young designers who have little industry exposure. The program helps them learn how to manage and grow small businesses and provides opportunities to show their work.

Brown says the concrete beehive helps create a more sustainable beekeeping industry by aiding the survival of bees; offering a more sustainable option for beekeepers and additional income sources for small-scale farmers.

Brown's "Beegin" project is a dual research and product design project intended to aid in the survival of bees and by extension, tackle the problem of decreasing pollination.

Under the supervision of Dr. Naude Malan of the university's Development Studies Department and Angus Donald Campbell, head of industrial design, Brown aims to develop beekeeping technology that is accessible, affordable and sustainable for small-scale farming communities, to stimulate socioeconomic development.

"Although I have always been fascinated by bees and apiculture,

the project emerged from thorough research," he says. "I interviewed urban farmers who told me they were interested in beekeeping but could not afford the equipment."

"I interviewed beekeepers who explained how the industry is in decline due to theft, vandalism, diseases, pests, fires, floods and pesticides. I began working with the farmers and beekeepers to develop a solution, and at the moment I have five urban farmers and five beekeepers testing out the system, with some great initial results."

Brown says the aim of the project is to develop an appropriate – sustainable and accessible – system for beekeeping.

"In south Africa, our biggest problem is theft and vandalism – honey badgers and people stealing honey and hives," Brown says in a television interview. "That is really affecting beekeepers and they are losing up to 30 % of their equipment every month."

"I am using concrete as a way to make the manufacturer of beehives more accessible, where instead of using carpentry tools and a workshop, you would be able to have a mold and just have cement and aggregate to produce as many of the beehives as you want with no electricity in a low-tech manner."

"The concrete will protect the bees from certain pests that in the wooden hive are able to bore into the wood and lay eggs. We do not have that problem with the concrete."

"I am trying to find a solution that will maintain a more sustainable beekeeping industry and also help urban farmers and other farmers to protect their pollinators."

If successful, he says, his system will contribute towards food security in two ways – indirectly, by bringing additional income to marginalized, small-scale farming communities and directly by helping to protect the pollination source of 70% of food crops.

Alan Harman



Inventor says concrete hive offers a more sustainable option for beekeepers and additional income sources for small-scale farmers. (University of Johannesburg photo)