

Te Tiaki Whare Pī, Mahi Mīere hoki Apiculture



Key challenges

- Profitability
- Pests and disease
- Skilled workers availability
- Consumer trends

Industry overview

- The COVID-19 pandemic brought with it a **surge in demand for honey**, particularly mānuka honey, and export prices reached an all-time high in 2021.
- There is a current **glut in honey**, making it difficult for some beekeepers to keep their businesses profitable.
- In 2021, an estimated **13% of Apiculture businesses were Māori-owned**.

Insights

Industry

- Successive high yields has meant there is still **more than a year's worth of honey in reserves**.
- A wet season in 2022/23 resulted in a **45% drop in honey production**.¹
- Beekeepers are experiencing **increasing pest pressure**, with varroa mite becoming resistant to routine treatment.

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Workforce

- Ensuring that the workforce have the skills required to **reduce biosecurity risks** remains front of mind.
- **Cost pressures** are leading some businesses to downscale hive numbers,² but it remains unclear what, if any, impact this might have on the workforce.
- The number of registered **beehives dropped 34%** from 2019 to 2023.³

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Learners and Providers

- There was a sharp **spike in Beekeeping learners** in 2021 with the Government's introduction of free training in the trades as part of the COVID-19 response.
- The large number of learners relative to the size of the workforce makes it **likely that a large proportion of these learners are hobbyists** and are not working in the sector.
- In 2023 we worked with providers to **strengthen Māori content** of programmes and ensure that training matches the desired **practical outcomes**.

[Read more >](#)

1 - Ministry for Primary Industries, '[Situation and Outlook for Primary Industries December 2023](#)' (New Zealand: Ministry for Primary Industries, December 2023)

2 - Ministry for Primary Industries, '[Situation and Outlook for Primary Industries June 2024](#)' (New Zealand: Ministry for Primary Industries, 2024)

3 - Ministry for Primary Industries, '[Farm Monitoring](#)', accessed 21 November 2023

Opportunities

Qualifications

The existing programme design has high theoretical components and does not align with the practical skills required on the job.

- Proposed learning outcomes are often theory based and don't align with the practical outputs required in beekeeping.
- There has been little to no mātauranga Māori or te ao Māori content in the qualifications, despite 17% of the workforce identifying as Māori.

Biosecurity

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- Beekeepers face ongoing challenges with managing pests and diseases such as Varroa mite (Varroa destructor) and American foulbrood (AFB).
- Regulations are in place that require compliance and diligent checks by beekeepers, and knowledge of pest and disease control methods are embedded into formal qualifications however, AFB is not outlined specifically.

Roadmap Actions

Action

Improve awareness of need for biosecurity skills

What is the problem?

There are two main biosecurity challenges impacting the Apiculture industry in Aotearoa. Varroa mite is a serious pest for beekeepers and is causing colony collapse across the motu. It has been in the country since 2000, and while treatments are easy, 4.4% of beekeepers (including both commercial operators and hobbyists) did not treat for varroa between Spring 2020 and Winter 2021. It is also understood that varroa mite is becoming resistant to some treatments, which may be exacerbating the problem.

American foulbrood is a disease which kills hives, and spreads quickly. Aotearoa beekeepers are trying to eradicate it completely, as the industry doesn't use antibiotics. Regulations are in place that require compliance and diligent checks by beekeepers, and knowledge of pest and disease control methods are embedded into formal qualifications however, AFB is not outlined specifically.

What are we doing about it?

We will work with industry and providers to raise awareness of the skills required and encourage access to relevant training.

Action

What is the problem?

What are we doing about it?

Work with providers to ensure training matches desired practical outcomes

The learning outcomes proposed by Te Pūkenga take a theoretical approach that is at odds with the more practical-orientated Graduate Profile Outcomes of the qualification.

We have recommended to Te Pūkenga that its draft unified programme for Apiculture has a greater practical focus.

Work with providers to strengthen Māori content of programmes

Muka Tangata recognises the huge amount of effort Te Pūkenga has put in to unifying their programmes, but also into the development and implementation of their frameworks and strategies such as Te Rito, Te Pe Tawhiti and the Equity and Ākonga Success Strategy, Whiria te Ako and Whiria Te Pūkenga (to name a few). These demonstrate a focus on ensuring Māori learner needs are met through cultural awareness and te ao Māori approaches.

We have recommended to Te Pūkenga that it include te ao Māori in its programme content.

***Keep up to date with progress on our Workforce Development Plans**

This represents a snapshot in time of the workforce development plan. For the most up to date information, please visit: mukatangata.workforceskills.nz or [sign up to our mailing list](#) for updates.