

Are you suspecting that the honey you bought is impure?

South Africa is known for hosting a diverse floral biodiversity of various plant species hence an abundant availability of pollen producing plants for quality honey production. With the availability of all the multiflora, South Africa is still a small honey producing country in comparison with other African countries such as Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya and Angola. This might be due to the fact that the country's honey producing space is dominated by beekeepers operating at a small scale capacity.

Honey is defined as a naturally sweet mixture produced by bees (*Apis mellifera*) from the nectar of flowers. It is a viscous food substance with main sugars like fructose, glucose, sucrose, maltose, with physical types and forms (comb, chunk, crystalized or granulated, creamed and liquid). In South Africa, honey is a regulated product under the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD). The quality of the product is regulated under the Agricultural Product Standards Act (No. 119 of 1990), within the jurisdiction of the Regulation No. R.835 of 25 August 2000. These regulations prescribe minimum requirements including packaging, marking and grading of honey and mixtures of bee products. Compliance with these regulations ensures that the honey producers access the formal market; level the playing field and therein assures the consumers have confidence on the product they purchase in the markets.

Honey is seen as a high-value foodstuff and is therefore a target for adulteration, which is a global concern. Adulteration occurs by either the addition of cheap sugar syrups or by diluting the high quality honey with low cost and low quality honey. Some honey is imported into South Africa (SA) at a lower price than that of locally produced honey. A form of misconduct would be to label the honey as being produced in SA, while in reality it would be imported or diluted with imported honey. In such instances, not only is the consumer misled, but the local producers cannot compete with the low pricing of these adulterated honeys. Therefore, there is a definite demand and growing interest in verifying the authenticity of honey to protect both the local producers as well as the consumer. This appeals a need for a scientifically based, fast, non-destructive, easy to use and low cost classification method to detect adulteration in honey. This method should be accessible for use by both small and commercial honey producers at no cost or reasonable price. There are testing requirements as per South Africa's honey regulations according to regulation 6(3) of R. 835 which identifies various tests to determine the composition, quality and ripeness

of honey: Hydroxymethylfurfural (HMF); density; sucrose content; reducing sugar content; the ratio of fructose to glucose; diastase activity; proline content; moisture content; water insoluble solids content, etc. The quality regulation states that any of the relevant tests may be selected, and if the honey does not comply with any one of these tests, then it shall be deemed as being below the standards for grades of honey.

In ensuring high consumer confidence on the honey within our local markets, the department (DALRRD) has increased the level of inspection by allotting Impumelelo Agribusiness Solutions (Pty) Ltd as an assignee to conduct inspection on both local and imported honey. This is critical in ensuring that there is consistency in the compliance and regulatory space for local and imported honey. The department is making an entreaty to local honey producers, processors and importers to ensure that they comply with the entire local and import regulations. Those who fail to comply will face drastic measures as per legislation and their products may be banned in South Africa. It is obligatory for all clients to provide customs with the correct description of goods in the consignment for correct detainment/referral of consignment to relevant department. Furthermore, all the honey consignment should be accompanied by DALRRD plant health import permit wherein conditions are clearly articulated.

For more information on plant health import permit, please visit the following link: <https://www.dalrrd.gov.za/Branches/Agricultural-Production-Health-Food-Safety/Plant-Health/Import-into-SA> or send an email to: PlantHealthPermits@dalrrd.gov.za

Should the public, producers and or honey consumers be suspicious of the honey in the market (such as not tasting like honey, price much lower than for the same amount of other honey in trade, incomplete labelling such as no physical address, etc.), they are encouraged to interact with Impumelelo Agribusiness Solutions (Pty) Ltd on the following contacts: 079 162 8103 or 013 752 2275; email address: inspections@impumeleloagribiz.co.za.

For further information on other regulations for local produce such as agronomy, deciduous fruit, animal products, processed products, local vegetables and local citrus and subtropical fruit, please contact the Directorate: Food Import and Export Standards on 012 319 6118/6310/6001 or access regulations on <http://www.dalrrd.gov.za>.



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Department:
Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

