

# NEW ZEALAND HONEY STORY



## KEY MESSAGES

# PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

## OUR PLAN IS SIMPLE – MAKE NEW ZEALAND FAMOUS FOR MORE GOOD THINGS

Our goal is to grow our global reputation for the prosperity of New Zealand and our vision is to enhance New Zealand's reputation beyond natural beauty.

We do this by arming our New Zealand exporters and Government voices with the tools, skills and knowledge to communicate more consistent and compelling stories about New Zealand to shift perceptions, open doors and grow opportunities.

This document provides useful information to share about our New Zealand Honey story. The information included in this document can be used for relevant activity, including speeches, presentations, events, social media and other activities when promoting the New Zealand honey industry offshore.

# OUR NEW ZEALAND STORY

## KO TĀTOU NEI – IT'S WHO WE ARE

New Zealand is a progressive nation of creative people, challenging the status quo, delivering new solutions to problems and turning ideas into reality, whilst always caring for people, place and planet.

Our New Zealand story is grounded in our values – three core attributes that define who we are, what we stand for and what we offer the world. Our uniqueness does not reside in any one of them, it is the combination of care and ingenuity, underpinned by integrity.

## KAITIAKI

We are guardians of people, place and planet. This care extends to everything we do and everything we create. We are considered a progressive nation yet we seek not to damage what is precious.

## INGENUITY

With our spirit of exploration, adventure and creativity, we turn ideas into reality and solve what others do not. Our fresh perspective to problem-solving and making things happen is valued by others.

## INTEGRITY

We do what we say we will do, and we do the right thing, because it's the right thing to do. This deeply ingrained value delivers the trust behind our good reputation.

# OVERARCHING MESSAGES NEW ZEALAND HONEY INDUSTRY

## CARING FOR NATURE'S GIFT

Drawing on the perfection of nature, New Zealand is a producer of exceptional honey products that stand out on the world stage in terms of flavour, wellness, and sustainability. From light florals to rich Mānuka, New Zealand honey is sought after by discerning consumers and innovative chefs all over the world.

## A SENSORY EXPERIENCE

Sourced from hives located in diverse landscapes from mountain highlands to low-lying pastures, New Zealand's wide spectrum of honey flavours and textures reflects the diversity of the country itself. Thanks to New Zealand's rare and endemic plants, our country offers honey flavours unlike anywhere else.

## QUALITY, PROTECTION AND ASSURANCE

New Zealand prides itself on its commitment and adherence to a range of measures to protect the quality, integrity and purity of its honey, and continually meets strict government, industry and international standards to ensure that its honey products are guaranteed to be amongst the world's best.

## TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

The New Zealand honey industry is a proud adopter, developer and user of technology along all stages of honey production and processing from the beehive to home, reassuring consumers that their products are authentic and pure. It is also an industry that thrives on innovation and the development of products or systems that harness the natural attributes of pure New Zealand honey.

## KAITIAKI PĪ

New Zealand apiarists are proud bee guardians, or kaitiaki pī, and have a duty to care for the health and wellness of our bees and their surrounding environment. The New Zealand honey industry is driven by a passion for exemplary beekeeping practices and on nurturing their critical role as honey producers and pollinators.

## CARING FOR NATURE'S GIFT

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- New Zealand's unique honey story begins 80 million years ago, when the Zealandia continent broke away from Gondwanaland, carrying with it what would become the ancient ancestors of our modern-day diversity. Much of Zealandia sank below the sea, leaving a group of islands positioned perfectly in the South Pacific on which plants and animals found nowhere else in the world would flourish. The Māori people were our first settlers and they named many of the unique plants found only here in Aotearoa New Zealand. When bees arrived much later with the first European settlers, we had honey types never seen before: Rātā, Kāmahi, Pōhutukawa, Mānuka and many others.
- New Zealand's natural environment, climate, location and clean air make it ideal for almost every kind of food production. Located in the South Pacific, the country has the light of Spain and the climate of Bordeaux, covers the area of Italy, and has the population of Singapore<sup>1</sup>.
- New Zealand food and beverage producers are proud of where their food comes from and are committed to producing world-class food and beverages whilst looking after the land and sea. New Zealand is 19th on the Environmental Performance Index (Yale, 2020) which ranks countries on a number of performance indicators covering environmental health and ecosystem vitality<sup>2</sup>.
- The purity of New Zealand's environment, and the diversity of the country's landscapes allows New Zealand to produce some of the best honeys in the world, nurtured by some of the world's best beekeepers.
- The first beehives arrived in New Zealand in 1839, and the first commercial production of honey is thought to have begun in the late 1870s. Māori were early adopters of beekeeping and developed practices based on their own tikanga (principles). There are also many family-based companies that have been beekeeping for generations. This strong tradition of beekeeping means that New Zealanders have a deep understanding of the connection between our bees, our natural resources and our unique honeys<sup>3</sup>.
- New Zealand Mānuka is the most well-known of New Zealand honeys, and has been the focus of extensive scientific research evidencing remarkable natural properties that set it apart from other honeys. This makes it highly prized by consumers throughout the world.

<sup>1</sup> The Investor's Guide to the New Zealand Food and Beverage Industry 2015, MBIE

<sup>2</sup> <https://epi.yale.edu>

<sup>3</sup> <https://teara.govt.nz/en/beekeeping>

- The New Zealand apiculture industry includes honey and bee products as well as pollination services and is worth an estimated NZ\$5 billion<sup>4</sup>.
- During the 2018/19 honey season, New Zealand produced an estimated 23,000 tonnes of honey, a record crop for the industry.
- There are 9,282 registered beekeepers in New Zealand, and 918,026 registered hives (as at June 2019).
- New Zealand pure honey exports were worth approximately \$355 million in 2018/2019.
- Top export markets for New Zealand pure honey products are China, UK, USA and Australia.
- The top export markets for monofloral Mānuka honey in retail packs are China, USA, Australia, Germany and Japan.
- Honey bees are also a significant part of the New Zealand horticultural and agricultural sectors. Bees are needed to pollinate pastoral clover for nitrogen regeneration, and to pollinate specialised small seed crops, berry, stone fruit and pip fruit orchards. The value of bees to New Zealand's wider food industry is many times greater than the revenue earned by honey.
- New Zealand honey is also exported as an ingredient in other food and non-food products such as bakery products, cosmetics, health supplements and medical products.
- New Zealand honey is protected by rigorous standards and regulations overseen by the New Zealand government. These rules ensure our honey is authentic and true to label. New Zealand honey is both GE-free and free from antibiotics.
- New Zealand beehives are often located in areas where bees are foraging over vast and remote areas that are pure and clean. In some cases, locations are so remote, hives are helicoptered in as there is no road access.
- The New Zealand honey industry is characterised by the care and passion for 'nature's gift' and beekeepers and producers have a deep-felt responsibility to protect the natural integrity of New Zealand honey, and the environment.

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4 Apiculture New Zealand

## CASE STUDIES

- **Southern Alps Honey**, based in the foothills of New Zealand's longest mountain range, is committed to supporting the environment, maintaining the best possible health for bees while having a positive impact on its community. Owners Leah and Ben Mee place their hives away from areas of intensive farming, instead siting them in remote alpine areas and amongst native beech forests. They ensure all hives are strategically positioned to cause minimal disturbance to the land, while maximum nutrition for bees. In 2018, Southern Alps Honey was awarded the inaugural Apiculture New Zealand Sustainability Good Practice Award, which highlighted the company's use of recyclable wooden hive ware, their strategic planting of trees to support bee nutrition, and local community education initiatives as well as their commitment to sustainable packaging.
- **Munro Honey Co** in the heart of Southern New Zealand, works to the ethos 'better for the bees, better for the planet'. Owner Steph Munro has built her company by putting the environment at the heart of every business decision. She supplies raw honey that is produced without filtering or heating, supplied in glass jars and posted in compostable and recyclable packaging. Munro Honey Co was awarded the Environmental Sustainability in Business Award by Environment Southland in 2019.

## A SENSORY EXPERIENCE

**Sourced from hives located in diverse landscapes from mountain highlands to low-lying pastures, New Zealand's wide spectrum of honey flavours and textures reflects the diversity of the country itself. Thanks to New Zealand's rare and endemic plants, we offer honey flavours unlike anywhere else.**

- New Zealand produces a wide range of diverse and varied honeys, from pale, mild creamed honeys to full-flavoured Mānuka and bush honeys. Each variety reflects and represents the literal flavour of the specific place and time it has been harvested, combined with how it has been processed and handled by honey masters in order to bring out its best attributes.
- Every New Zealand honey tells a story of where it comes from – the landscape, the climate, the season, and the flowers and trees. There are many similarities between honey and wine, and similar honeys grown in different regions, in different seasons can have a vastly different flavour profiles. Honey produced by the same beekeeper and sourced from the same beehives in the same location, can differ from year-to-year depending on the specific climate that year. Just like each winery's vintage differs from year-to-year, so too do our honey flavours and taste profiles.
- Rare and endemic plants found only in New Zealand produce totally different honey to elsewhere in the world. The most famous is Mānuka honey, with other examples including Tāwari, an orange-tinged honey that tastes of rosehip, Rātā, a rare lime-flavoured honey with salty notes, and Kāmahi, a rich sweet honey with a buttery finish. With some of these native plants having short harvest periods, or only blooming well every few years, this honey is a precious resource that beekeepers nurture and treasure.
- People will gravitate to different flavours and tastes depending on personal preferences. For example, 'red wine' honeys are strong and dark and include Mānuka, Rewarewa, Thyme, Honeydew and Bush honeys. At the other end of the spectrum are lighter honeys such as Rātā, Pōhutukawa, Tāwari and Kāmahi that can be compared to dessert wines. In the middle are the popular honeys such as the Pastural Clovers or Natural Bush Blends, which can be compared to popular wines such as Pinot Gris or Sauvignon Blanc.
- New Zealand honey is sold in both liquid and creamed form and comes in a wide array of golden tones. Generally, the paler the honey, the milder the flavour profile. Honey can be monofloral – predominantly made from one type of nectar, or multifloral – made from a variety of nectar sources. Creamed honey is well-known in New Zealand but less so in other markets – this smooth, thickened and spreadable honey is user friendly and has a fudge-like consistency that families love.

- New Zealand honey is a wonderfully diverse ingredient that can be a breakfast staple, a key ingredient in traditional baking, a soothing balm in times of sickness or incorporated into sweet and savoury sauces, marinades and vinaigrettes. It can be used as a naturally sweet alternative in drinks, baking and smoothies, and it can be a perfect accompaniment to cheese platters. It can also feature as a star ingredient in indulgent desserts. With its unique flavour profiles, New Zealand honey gives favourite dishes a new added twist.



## QUALITY, PROTECTION AND ASSURANCE

**New Zealand prides itself on its commitment and adherence to a range of measures to protect the quality, integrity and purity of its honey, and continually meets strict government, industry and international standards to ensure that its honey products are guaranteed to be amongst the world's best.**

- New Zealand has a proven reputation internationally and consumers increasingly recognise and trust 'brand New Zealand'. In 2019, New Zealand ranked 5th on the Reputation Institute's list of most reputable countries (up from 7th in 2015)<sup>5</sup> and in 2017 New Zealand's nation brand image ranked 14th out of 50 nations on the Anholt-GfK Nation Brands Index<sup>6</sup>.
- New Zealand's stringent food safety and biosecurity measures have earned it a global reputation as a trusted supplier of quality products and ingredients to many of the world's major global food and beverage companies. New Zealand is also a leader in food safety and product traceability and is a trusted supplier of high quality and safe food in more than 140 countries<sup>7</sup>
- New Zealand ranks 19th out of 113 countries for food security, measured through food quality, safety, availability and affordability on the Economist Intelligence Unit's Global Food Security Index<sup>8</sup>.
- New Zealand's food safety laws and focus apply across the whole food production supply chain from the farm/beehive (growing) to the plate/home (consumption). This focus ensures that food is safe to eat, and that risks are identified and managed appropriately. New Zealand's reputation for stringent food safety helps to maintain and increase access to international markets.
- New Zealand has specific standards and regulations relating to the wider beekeeping and honey associated industries including bee products, honey and Mānuka honey manufacturing, processing, sales and storage. Overseen by the Ministry for Primary Industries, New Zealand honey producers must adhere to strict rules around food production and labelling<sup>9</sup>.
- In 2017, the New Zealand Government's Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) finalised a scientific definition for New Zealand Mānuka honey. This definition means that all New Zealand Mānuka honey sold overseas must have passed tests carried out at government-recognised laboratories, ensuring that consumers can be assured of the authenticity of our honey<sup>10</sup>.

5 <https://www.reputationinstitute.com/research>

6 <https://www.ipsos.com>

7 Ministry for Primary Industries

8 <https://foodsecurityindex.eiu.com>

9 <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/processing/honey-and-bee-products/>

10 Mānuka honey information: Ministry for Primary Industries, UMF® Honey Association, Airborne Honey

- All beekeepers in New Zealand have a legal obligation under the Biosecurity Act 1993 to register as a beekeeper and to register their hives to support effective monitoring of pests and diseases.
- As part of its commitment to stringent food safety at an international level, New Zealand has been a member of Codex since its formation in 1963, and supports international food standards, guidelines and codes of practice.
- New Zealand has strict controls over the importation of any products, including bee and honey products. There is no importation of bees allowed into New Zealand, and the importation of honey is restricted to six neighbouring Pacific islands (Niue, Pitcairn Island, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Solomon Islands)<sup>11</sup>.
- New Zealand actively works to manage biosecurity risks to bees through collaborative government and industry initiatives. We are part of international efforts to track and monitor bee health through annual COLOSS Honey Bee Research Association beekeeper surveys. New Zealand's survey has the greatest beekeeper participation rate of any nation.

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<sup>11</sup> Ministry for Primary Industries

## TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

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- Consumers all over the world are looking for evidence of where their food comes from as well as nutritional information, and an increasing number of New Zealand honey producers are investing in traceability technology and processes to provide detailed information about every jar and every batch.
- New Zealand has a strong history of innovation in honey. New Zealand biochemist Peter Molan (MBE) was the first to prove the unique properties of Mānuka honey in the 1980s revolutionising the Mānuka honey market and leading to the use of specialised Mānuka honey in wound dressings.
- New Zealand has many innovators in hive technology software that allows for accurate traceability, improved beekeeper efficiency and the creation of valuable data to better understand New Zealand bees. Bee researchers in New Zealand are also making good use of this technology to expand their knowledge of bee behaviour and bee health.
- Innovation is evident across every facet of the New Zealand honey industry and includes new product development in health and wellness products as well as new and innovative food products that showcase the extent of the versatility of honey as a whole. New Zealand honey is used as an ingredient in sports drinks, and brewed into honey beers, mead and liqueurs; it is added to ice cream and included in marinades and sauces.
- New Zealand honey and bee products are also increasingly common ingredients in a range of health, cosmetic and wellbeing products including supplements, as well as body washes and soaps, candles and deodorants<sup>12</sup>.
- New Zealand companies also supply bee products such as bee venom, royal jelly and propolis for use in wide range of natural health and beauty products.

<sup>12</sup> <https://manukahoneyofnz.com>

## CASE STUDIES

- **Amaia Ltd** is a honey producer and queen and bee breeder based on New Zealand's remote Chatham Islands. They have used unique floral varieties to create an innovative freeze-dried honey product in conjunction with local chef Kaai Sibery and Go Wild fellow director Francesca Bonventre. Go Wild Chatham Islands freeze-dried honey is made from flowers endemic to the Chatham Islands, which produces a distinctive, richly flavoured product. Freeze-dried honey is light and crunchy and can be used as a topping or eaten on its own. This product was awarded a silver medal at the New Zealand Outstanding Food Producer Awards in 2020.
- **Mānuka Health New Zealand** uses its knowledge of the unique health properties of honey and bee products to create a range of innovative wellness products for international consumers. In addition to its high grade Mānuka honey, Mānuka Health New Zealand sells innovative products made from propolis and royal jelly.
- New Zealand-based, international honey producer **Comvita** uses technology to ensure traceability of all its honey. Comvita subsidiary, Kiwi Bee, is one of the country's largest apiary operations with more than 33,000 hives. Kiwi Bee tracks every hive using technology that utilises a smart barcode solution, allowing complete transparency from the hive to the shelf.
- **Onuku Honey Limited**, a 100% Māori owned honey company developed its own product authentication system which allows consumers to access product and provenance information specific to each batch. This information can be accessed through the embedded NFC tag attached to the product. Each tag is individually registered to Onuku Honey Limited and is part of a multi-tier authentication and anti-counterfeiting system.

## KAITIAKI PĪ

**New Zealand apiarists are proud bee guardians, or kaitiaki pī, and have a duty to care for the health and wellness of our bees and their surrounding environment. The New Zealand honey industry is driven by a passion for exemplary beekeeping practices and on nurturing their critical role as honey producers and pollinators.**

- The New Zealand honey industry places significant importance on the wellness of bees, and the integral role they play in supporting New Zealand's diverse environment and people. The industry is committed to ensuring that the bees' natural environment is maintained.
- New Zealand beekeepers are also important collaborators with the **New Zealand Trees for Bees Research Trust**. This is a New Zealand-based not for profit organisation focused on planting strategically for bee health. The trust researches effective bee-friendly plants for both urban and rural environments and provides a range of online resources for landowners, the rural sector, gardeners and beekeepers to use to maximise bee health. It has planted more than 70,000 bee-friendly plants across the country since its establishment.
- Industry group **Apiculture New Zealand** has formalised best practice care of bees into a voluntary Code of Conduct, which all its members adhere to. Apiculture New Zealand has also implemented an apprenticeship programme in conjunction with Primary ITO and established an annual scholarship to ensure the next generation of beekeepers have a solid foundation in bee care and honey production excellence.

## CASE STUDIES

- Northland-based **Kai Ora Honey** is a Māori, family-owned business producing top quality Mānuka Honey which they share with the world. Kai Ora's business model is strongly influenced by Māori heritage and culture, with relationships with community, whenua (land) and bees at the heart of all they do. They aspire to create opportunities to benefit future generations of their community in the Far North, while demonstrating kaitiakitanga for their land.
- Also based in Northland, **Tai Tokerau Honey** is a 100% Māori owned and operated beekeeping company with tikanga (Māori values and belief) at its core. Sustainability, care of both whenua (land) and bees is key to the company's operations. Tai Tokerau Honey works closely with iwi, land trusts and land owners with the goal of creating a productive and sustainable industry in Northland offering employment and opportunities to local communities.
- Many New Zealand honey businesses are multi-generational family businesses that have proudly looked after their land and their bees for many years. **Mossop's Honey** was established more than 70 years ago, with the Mossop family working hard to develop a unique natural granulation process that retains the honey's unique flavours. Mossop's Honey prides itself on producing top quality honey and providing personalised, friendly service. The company is committed to encouraging best practice beekeeping and is the sponsor of the annual Ron Mossop Scholarship which supports a young beekeeper in their training.
- **Arataki Honey** (Hawke's Bay Division), established in 1944 is a family owned honey, beekeeping and tourism operation. Located in the sunny eastern coast of New Zealand, it produces a large range Mānuka and other native floral honeys. Taking care of the environment and sustainability are important to their on-going business practices. To take advantage of the long Hawke's Bay summer sunshine hours they recently installed solar panels on their storage and production facilities and now boast the largest solar-powered site of its kind in the region. Arataki Honey Hawke's Bay is also a big contributor to tourism in the region and with their newly refurbished Visitor Centre they educate over 60,000 visitors per year on how to care for honeybees and their environment.

# NEW ZEALAND HONEYS<sup>13</sup>

## CLOVER HONEY

Clover is one of New Zealand's favourite honeys. Pale gold in colour, it has a clean, mild, traditional flavour and comes in both creamed and liquid forms, with the creamed form known for its 'fudge-like' characteristics. It's a favourite for spreading on toast. Clover honey is a traditional farm honey from both the North and South Island, and there can be marked differences depending on where the honey is from, for example, Clover honey from Canterbury is white and pure, whereas Clover from the north can often be much darker.

## HONEYDEW

Honeydew honey is made from nectar that is produced by insects, rather than from flower nectar. It is also called 'forest honey', 'pine honey' or 'fir honey'. Honeydew is medium-dark amber in colour and tastes complex and treacly. Some have described its flavour as being like 'fruit cake'. Apples, pears and blue cheeses match well with Honeydew honey, and it can be a great addition to marinades. Honeydew honey is predominantly sourced from the South Island's West Coast beech forests.

## KĀMAHI

Kāmahi is pale, lemon-yellow in colour and has a rich, sweet taste with a buttery finish. It pairs well with camembert, washed rind cheeses or goat's feta, and works well as a base for sweet sauces or as a sweetener in spicy dishes. Kāmahi is produced in both the North and South Islands, however most Kāmahi honey is sourced from the West Coast of the South Island.

## KĀNUKA

A closely related but lesser known relative of Mānuka, Kānuka honey is similar in both colour and flavour. It has earthy bush notes and a toffee-type finish. Kānuka honey is sourced from all over New Zealand.

## MĀNUKA

Mānuka is the queen of New Zealand honeys, well-known domestically and internationally. Its colour can range from dark cream to dark brown and it has a distinctive earthy mineral flavour. It has also been described as woody or nutty in taste, with toffee notes. Depending on the packaging process it can have a 'jellied' texture and often small air bubbles can be seen. Mānuka honey is sourced from all over New Zealand.

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<sup>13</sup> Apiculture New Zealand, Airborne Honey, Maureen Conquer (international honey judge).  
Information about honey flavours and wine comparisons: Maureen Conquer (international honey judge)

## PŌHUTUKAWA

Made from one of New Zealand's most famous native trees, creamed Pōhutukawa honey is off-white in colour with a clean, floral taste profile. It has been described as being like butterscotch. Trees in coastal regions, like Pōhutukawa, can sometimes produce honey with a slightly salty taste. This is the taste of summer on North Island beaches.

## RĀTĀ

Rātā honey is pale cream in colour and one of New Zealand's sweetest honeys. It has a lime flavour profile, with some detecting 'salty' flavour notes. Rātā trees flower sporadically with some trees flowering well every three years, and spectacularly every seven, making this one of New Zealand's rarest honeys.. Although there are eight Rātā species in New Zealand, Rātā honey is produced predominantly from the Southern Rātā on the West Coast of New Zealand's South Island.

## REWAREWA

Made from the New Zealand honey suckle flower, Rewarewa is light amber in colour with hints of orange. It has complex herbaceous flavours and a rich, malty taste which makes it a great natural sweetener for teas. This honey is mainly sourced from the Bay of Plenty region.

## TĀWARI

Deep gold to orange in colour, this honey is described as tasting like rosehip syrup or very sweet golden syrup. It comes from the East Coast of the North Island and can be rich, like white chocolate melting off the tongue. It makes a delicious topping for pancakes or ice cream.

## THYME

Produced from the flowers of the Thyme herb in Central Otago, and grown in the hills in hot, arid conditions, this is a pale, amber honey, with a very strong, distinctive herbal taste. This honey works well drizzled over roast vegetables, in vinaigrettes or stirred into pumpkin soup. It equally works well when partnered with game meat from the same region.



**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION  
PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH  
NEW ZEALAND STORY**

E. [admin@nzstory.govt.nz](mailto:admin@nzstory.govt.nz)

