



Module 7

Honey and Bee Products Production Standard

Incorporates:

- Bees
 - Honey
-

This document replaces the BIO-GRO New Zealand Organic Standards, 30 April 2001: Module 4.6

The reasons for change are:

- regular review required under IFOAM accreditation;
- incorporation of notified changes since the 30 April 2001 Standards were published;
- incorporation of other changes required for ongoing compliance with the IFOAM Basic Standards, the NZFSA OOAP, and overseas market regulations;
- organic production systems are continuously evolving.

This document may be altered at any time. It was current at the date in the header of each page of the document. It is recommended that anyone intending to use this document contact BioGro or check the BioGro website www.biogro.co.nz to confirm that this is the current version.

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1 Scope and purpose

This BioGro Standard contains the production requirements and audit criteria for the certification of and licensing by BioGro of producers of organic honey and bee products to use the BioGro trademarks and logos.

This BioGro Standard specifies the production requirements and audit criteria that must be met by all:

- a. producers of organic honey and bee products certified by BioGro; and
- b. producers of organic honey and bee products licensed by BioGro to use the BioGro trademarks and logos.

All honey and bee products bearing the BioGro trademark are produced in accordance with this Standard.

Information on BioGro and the use of the BioGro trademark/logo can be obtained from *Module 1 Introduction* and *Module 3 Certification System*.

Information on the BioGro requirements for processing can be obtained from *Module 13 Processing Standard*. Information on the BioGro requirements for distribution can be obtained from *Module 14 Distribution Standard*.

The audit checklists (available on request from BioGro) may be used for self-audits in preparation for audits by BioGro.

2 References

All relevant regulations and industry requirements must be complied with.

3 Definitions

The BioGro definitions of terms can be found in the BioGro Standards *Module 2: Glossary of Terms*.

4 Certification process

4.1 Timing of the initial application

The processing of the initial application for BioGro certification of a bee-keeping operation commences with the inspection of the localities of all of the hive sites.

The localities of all hive sites and a representative sample (using a sample size based on the square root of the total number of sites) of those sites must be inspected and approved by BioGro, as complying with the requirements of this Module. Inspection and approval must occur before the start of the honey flow in order for honey and bee products taken from those hive sites over the following season to be considered for certification. This means that initial applications must reach BioGro before 31 July.

Hives brought in from conventional sources cannot produce certified honey and bee products until they have been at least 12 months on a site approved by BioGro either prior or subsequently to the hives being located there.

4.2 Initial application

4.2.1 Obtaining BioGro Standards and Applicants' Pack

The first step in registering with BioGro is to obtain a current copy of the relevant Modules of the BioGro Standards and an Applicants' Pack from BioGro.

4.2.2 Information provided to the applicant by BioGro

Once a request for an application has been received by BioGro, the applicant will be sent the following:

- i. the Applicants' Pack;
- ii. a schedule of fees.

4.2.3 Information to be held by applicants

Applicants must have a current copy of the relevant Modules of the BioGro Standards.

4.2.4 Applications to BioGro

Before the audit can proceed, BioGro must receive the following from the applicant:

- the full set of information as specified in section 4.2.5 below; and
- completed application forms; and
- the appropriate application fees.

The applicant must sign the application forms and information provided as correct and as an undertaking to comply with the requirements of the BioGro Standards. As a guarantee that the information is correct, all documentation must be signed by the day-to-day manager of the operation to be certified.

4.2.5**Information provided by the applicant**

The applicant must provide the following information to BioGro with the completed application forms:

a. Hive Sites

Colour topographical maps showing all hive sites to be certified including over-wintering sites, with map keys showing the following for each site:

- i. site name;
- ii. grid reference; and
- iii. number of hives.

For each hive site provide:

- iv. Diagrams showing the approximate boundaries of all properties within a 3 kilometre radius of each site, and the name of the contact person and the predominant land use for each property.
- v. A land user statement completed by the contact person for each property, detailing all pesticide (herbicide, fungicide and insecticide) use, specifically the product name and total quantity used on that property within 3 kilometre of the hive sites to be certified:
 - a. in the previous 12 months, and
 - b. predicted in the next 12 months.
- vi. A property manager statement as specified in section 4.2.5 b. ii. below.

b. Site management

- i. Details of the management of all certified hive sites, covering the immediate area around each site including a 5 metre buffer zone drawn around the outermost hives, including:
 - a. weed management;
 - b. rodent management; and
 - c. management of other pests, such as wasps.
- ii. A statement from the manager(s) of the property(s) where each site is located as to the use, within 5 metres of that site, of pesticides prohibited under the BioGro Standards.

c. Hive management

- i. A copy of the current American Foul Brood Pest Management Strategy (AFB PMS) Annual Declaration.
- ii. Details of all hive inputs, including:
 - hive construction and maintenance materials;
 - foundation wax;
 - foundation frames;
 - queens; and
 - other.
- iii. Details of all hive management practices for all hives both certified and uncertified, including:
 - pest control for insects, wasps, mites, rodents and other pests;
 - varroa mite control;
 - disease control;
 - smoker fuel;
 - bee removal;
 - queening;
 - sugar feeding; and
 - other.

d. Extraction

State whether the honey extraction facility (the honey-house) is dedicated to certified use only or whether uncertified honey is ever extracted or stored there (parallel production).

i. Parallel production

If the facility is not dedicated, detailed documented procedures and records are required to specify:

- the sources and quantities of certified honey extracted and stored on site;
- the sources and quantities of uncertified honey extracted and stored on site;
- the identification system for certified hives and honey;
- the storage system which separates certified honey from uncertified honey;
- the system used to clean the facility prior to extracting and packing certified honey;
- a storage system which separates certified wax from uncertified wax before and after it has been melted; and
- cleardown of equipment between the melting of certified and non-certified wax.

ii. Extraction procedures

Provide a site plan and floor plan of the honey-house, clearly showing the equipment and processes that are used. These plans must clearly show the process flow from the bringing in of the hives, through the extraction process, through to storage of the extracted honey.

iii. Cleaning

Describe the cleaning procedures and materials used for all equipment, contact surfaces and the honey-house.

iv. Temperatures

All heated equipment and heated rooms must be controlled by thermostat. Indicate the thermostat control setting for the temperatures at which all extraction equipment and rooms in the honey-house function.

v. Records

Provide an example of the recording systems used for all extractions carried out. These records must show the following audit trail for all honey extracted:

- hive site;
- date the frames were moved from the site to the honey-house;
- identification of frames at the honey-house;
- storage temperature at the honey-house;
- extraction date;
- quantities extracted;
- honey storage details;
- drums or containers used;
- labelling and batch numbering of the drums or containers; and
- wax production quantities.

e. Handling of other bee products

The same requirements as in section 4.2.5 d. above are required for all facilities used for processing bee products, such as pollen.

f. Storage, packing and consignment

i. Packing records which show the audit trail for all honey packed.

ii. Provide written procedures for the storage on site of all honey and bee products, and for the consignment of these honey and bee products to purchasers.

iii. Provide records of all containers used and cleaning procedures followed if containers are not new.

iv. If retail packing is being carried out, provide details on all packing procedures, container sizes and labels used.

v. If processing of honey other than retail packing is being carried out then refer to *Module 13 Processing Standard*.

g. Testing

Analytical testing of all honey is required prior to certification. Refer to the specifications provided in section 5.5 of this Module.

4.2.6

Initial audit

As soon as an initial application is lodged with BioGro and all fees are paid, the application will be issued to an auditor.

The auditor will first conduct a document review and will contact the applicant if any further information is required before the on-site audit. The auditor then arranges to meet and interview the applicant, inspect all relevant hive sites and their localities, and examine any necessary documents and paperwork.

At the completion of the audit the auditor will provide the applicant with copies of any Corrective Action Requests (CARs) detailing recommended corrective actions. The auditor will inform the applicant of the recommendations that will be made to the BioGro Certification Panel. The Main Audit Record Sheet and any CARs will be signed by the applicant to confirm their accuracy.

The onus is on the applicant to demonstrate that they are complying with the BioGro Standards. Provision of inadequate information or the need for further visits to finalise corrective actions may lead to further fees being charged.

To increase the efficiency of the BioGro audit, applicants are encouraged to carry out self-audits prior to the audit using the checklist provided by the BioGro office.

4.2.7

BioGro registration

The auditor's report and recommendation are reviewed by the BioGro Certification Panel. The panel advises the applicant of its decision in writing and which hive sites are approved for the production of BioGro certified honey and bee products. The applicant is sent the Licence Agreement to complete and is issued with a copy of the Code of Practice. On receiving the completed Licence Agreement, BioGro registers the applicant subject to a further audit during harvest.

4.2.8

Audit at first harvest

A second audit will be carried out during the extraction of the first certified honey crop. This audit will focus on the extraction, storage and labelling procedures.

Following the satisfactory completion of this audit and BioGro receiving acceptable analytical test results for the honey or bee products, the applicant will be issued with BioGro certification and is then licensed to apply and direct the application of the BioGro trademark/logo on their honey and bee products.

4.2.9

Changes to the OMP

Following issuing of BioGro certification, any proposed changes to the OMP, including use of input products not listed in the current OMP, must be approved by BioGro in writing prior to those changes being made.

4.3 Renewal application and ongoing audit requirements

4.3.1 Applications for renewal

Three months before the expiry date of the BioGro certificate each year, the licensee will be sent an application to apply for renewal of BioGro certification. This must be received by BioGro at least two months before the expiry date ensure there is adequate time to carry out the audit.

Applications for renewal of certification must update information sent with the previous year's application. The update may be either a new set of documentation, or a clear outline of the changes that have occurred since the last application. All information covering sections 4.2.5 a. i. – iv., vi., 4.2.5 b. i., ii., 4.2.5 c. i. – iii., 4.2.5 d. i. – iv., and 4.2.5 e. above must be submitted.

Information covering sections 4.2.5 a. v., 4.2.5 d. v., 4.2.5 f., and 4.2.5 g. above must be submitted prior to the completion of the certification process for that season's honey and bee products.

Updated land user statements as required in section 4.2.5 a. v. must be submitted for the first 3 years of certification. Following that they only need to be updated every 3 years unless there are significant changes in the land uses in the hive site localities.

The requirements of the Standards for hive sites and hives are as follows and must be addressed in the application:

- a. New hive sites, in addition to the existing approved sites, are subject to the requirements of section 4.2.5.
- b. Extra hives brought in from certified sources and accompanied with a current BioGro certificate and proof that they have come from BioGro-approved sites will retain certification.
- c. Licensees' own uncertified hives to be converted to certified production must be moved onto BioGro-approved sites at least 12 months before harvest. Honey from such hives is subject to extra residue testing requirements in their first year of certified production as specified in section 5.5.1 a. iv.
- d. Certified hives moved away from BioGro approved sites are downgraded to conventional status.
- e. Hives from conventional sources must go through a minimum of 12 months conversion before being used for the collection of certified honey. Honey from such hives is subject to extra residue testing requirements as specified in section 5.5. 1 a. iv.

4.3.2 Audit, registration and certification

- a. On receipt of the renewal application and fees by BioGro, the auditor will conduct a document review on the updated information and will contact the licensee if any other information is required. The auditor will then arrange a time for the on-site audit.
- b. The auditor will observe extraction procedures at least once every 3 years.
- c. The BioGro auditor will inspect the localities of each hive site at least once every 5 years.
- d. On the successful completion of the renewal audit, the licensee will be issued with a certificate that approves the management of the hives to BioGro Standards. This certificate may be used for marketing. Certification of the honey and bee products will be subject to acceptable analytical test results. For acceptable test levels refer to BioGro Standards *Appendix A: Residue Levels in Certified Products, Water, Soil and Composts*.
- e. Once extraction has started the licensee must have supplied the auditor with a complete set of valid land user statements. The auditor will then send a copy of the testing specification sheet to the licensee. With the completion of extraction records and receipt by the auditor of acceptable test results, BioGro will issue a certificate for the year's harvest, or for the specified drums that the test sample covered.

- f. On receipt by BioGro of acceptable audit trail information for batches of honey, and further acceptable analytical test results where required, BioGro will issue export certificates for consignments of honey or bee products.

In addition to the annual audit, each licensee will receive periodic unannounced audits. To a certain extent, these audits will be targeted at specific areas of concern, such as parallel storage and extraction, and extraction temperatures.

4.3.3 Changes to the OMP

Following issuing of BioGro certification, any proposed changes to the OMP, including use of input products not listed in the current OMP, must be approved by BioGro in writing prior to those changes being made.

5 Honey production Standards

For lists of materials that BioGro allows refer to the BioGro Standards *Appendix B: Permitted and Restricted Materials and Practices*. All other materials are prohibited unless allowed for specific use in other parts of the BioGro Standards.

The qualification of bee products as being from organic production is closely bound up both with the characteristics of the hives' treatments and the quality of the environment. This qualification also depends on the conditions for extraction, processing and storage of bee products.

5.1 Hive site location

For BioGro approval, all sites, including those used for over-wintering, must meet the following requirements:

- a. Hives must be sited in organically managed fields and/or wild natural areas. Hives should be sited in areas that ensure access to sources of honeydew, nectar and pollen that meet organic crop production requirements sufficient to supply all of the bees' nutritional needs.
- b. Hive sites must not be within 3 km of the following land uses:
 - i. intensive conventional cropping;
 - ii. intensive conventional horticulture;
 - iii. industrial or urban sites that may provide a source of contamination, e.g. urban centers of more than 300 permanent residents, motorways, waste dumps etc. (Note. Where hives are sited within 3 km of towns of more than 300 permanent residents then land user statements are required from a random sample of at least 20 percent of the residents.); or
 - iv. any other intensive use of materials not allowed under the BioGro Standards.

5.2 Hive site management

All materials and practices for the management of hive sites must only be with materials allowed in the BioGro Standards. This includes management of:

- a. vegetation;
- b. rodents;
- c. pests such as wasps; and
- d. other pests.

5.3 Hive management

5.3.1 Hive materials and maintenance

Hives must be made of natural materials presenting no risk of contamination to the environment or to apicultural products.

- a. **Preservation of woodenware**
 - i. Paraffin wax dipping is permitted for the preservation of hive woodenware.
 - ii. Copper naphthenate or any other material not allowed under the BioGro Standards must not be applied as a timber preservative on new or existing woodenware.
 - iii. If any non-approved preservative has been previously used on existing woodenware in hives to be converted to certified use, all surfaces must be thoroughly and regularly painted with a material approved in writing by BioGro to prevent contact with the bees. Honey from such hives must be tested for residues of the preservative.

5.3.2 Origin of hives

Hives must be constituted by means of the division of colonies or the purchase of hives from certified apiaries.

Refer also to the requirements of sections 4.3.1 b., c., and e. of this Module.

5.3.3 Foundation

- a. Foundation wax for honey and comb must be certified.
- b. Plastic frames must be BioGro-approved types, and if sprayed with wax then that wax must be certified.

5.3.4 Pest and disease management

- a. Health and welfare of the hives must be primarily achieved by good hygiene and hive management practices. Where preventative measures fail and pest and disease problems require treatment then preference must be given to using phytotherapeutic and homeopathic treatments.
- b. If treatment occurs using prohibited substances the hive(s) must be placed in quarantine, and all the wax must be replaced with new, certified wax before a quarantine period of 12 months commences. Honey and bee products taken from treated hives during the 12 months quarantine and conversion period can not be sold as organic or as certified.
- c. All treatments must be clearly recorded, together with details of the active pharmacological substance used, the diagnosis, the dose, the method of administration, the duration of the treatment, and the legal with-holding period.

- d. The following substances are permitted for control of *Varroa destructor* mite:
- formic acid
 - lactic acid
 - acetic acid
 - oxalic acid
 - menthol
 - thymol
 - eucalyptol
 - camphor.

Hives treated with these substances retain certification and do not need to be quarantined.

The practice of destroying the male brood is also permitted in order to control *Varroa destructor*, but is only permitted for this purpose.

5.3.5 Smoker fuel

Smoker fuel must only be natural materials, such as jute or pine needles. Smoker fuel must only have contact with materials allowed under the BioGro Standards. Sacks that have contained treated seed must not be used. The use of smoke must be kept to a minimum.

5.3.6 Bee removal

Bee excluders, escapes, and blowers are approved. Other systems for the removal of bees from honey supers must be approved by BioGro prior to use.

5.3.7 Supplementary feeding of honey, sugar, and pollen

- a. At the end of a production season, sufficient reserves of honey and pollen must be left in the hives for winter feed. As a guide, at least 25 kg of honey should be left in each hive.
- b. Where the survival of the hives is endangered due to extreme climatic conditions, supplementary feeding may occur using certified honey or certified pollen, preferably from the same apiary.
- c. Management systems that would require, as a normal management practice, the feeding of sucrose or natural pollen substitutes to all, or substantially all, similarly sited and managed honeybee colonies, are not permitted.
 - The feeding of sucrose or natural pollen substitutes will only be approved as an emergency procedure where unusual seasonal conditions are placing the wellbeing of the bees at risk. Certified sugar must be used. Written approval is required from BioGro prior to any feeding of certified sugar or approved natural pollen substitutes.
- e. Supplementary feeding may only be carried out between the last honey harvest and 15 days before the start of the next nectar or honeydew flow period.
- f. If supplementary feeding is carried out within 15 days of the start of the honey or honeydew flow then that season's honey or honeydew from those hives can not be certified.
- g. The extraction of honey from brood chambers where sugar feeding has been used is prohibited.
- h. Receipts for sugar purchases and records of all supplementary feeding including product used, date fed, quantities fed, and hives fed, must be available during the audit and at all other times.

5.3.8 Queen production

Queen production must be done in accordance with the principles and specifications of these Standards.

5.3.9 Wing clipping

Wing clipping is prohibited.

5.4 Honey extraction

The use of combs containing broods is prohibited for honey extraction. The destruction of bees in the combs as a method of harvesting of bee products is also prohibited.

5.4.1 Parallel processing

Where there is parallel processing at the honey-house, storage and extraction processes must prevent mixing of certified honey with uncertified honey. In particular there must be clear documented procedures in place for:

- a. clear labelling of boxes containing certified honey and their separation from all uncertified honey; and
- b. prior cleaning of all equipment coming into direct contact with the honey during extraction, processing and packing of certified honey.

5.4.2 Cleaners

Cleaners must be either:

- a. materials allowed in the BioGro Standards, refer to *Appendix B: Permitted and Restricted Materials and Practices*, or
- b. approved in writing by BioGro.

5.4.3 Extraction system

Honey extraction must be carried out using a method that will prevent contamination or degradation of the certified honey. The use of chemical synthetic bee repellents is prohibited during honey extraction operations.

5.4.4 Honey temperatures

- a. The temperature of certified honey must not exceed 40°C during storage, extraction, processing or packing.
- b. Where a heat exchanger is used for extraction a daily record of the temperatures during extraction must be kept in a logbook for audit purposes and be available for audit at all times.
- c. HMF testing is mandatory for all extracted and processed honey, and the HMF level must not exceed 8 mg/kg.
- d. BioGro must be informed when any honey is exposed to temperatures exceeding 40°C. The affected honey may be able to be certified on the condition that it is labeled "For processing use only" or similar BioGro approved wording.
- e. Certified honey in storage must never be exposed to temperatures above 40°C and must be stored at room temperature (27°C or less). Certified honey must not be stored outside unless the temperature is always maintained at less than 27°C.

5.4.5 Strainer pore size

The pore size of strainers must be 200 microns or larger.

5.4.6 Seed honey

Only certified honey may be used for seeding to promote fine granulation.

5.4.7 Containers

- a. New drums and containers are allowed.
- b. Second hand drums and containers must be made of food-grade materials, and previous use(s) must have been for non-toxic food products only. Such drums and containers must have been cleaned according to procedures approved by BioGro.
- c. All full drums and containers of honey must be clearly labelled and identified by a batch number that is traceable to the hive.

5.4.8 Retail packing

- a. Packing of honey into certified retail packs must be done on certified premises.
- b. Retail packaging must be labelled and/or coded in such a way that it can be traced back to the original extraction batch.
- c. Written approval must be obtained in writing from BioGro for all proposed labelling prior to printing.

5.4.9 Wax

Wax can be certified where its production complies with all the requirements of this Module and records are kept to verify this.

5.4.10 Audit trail

A daily production record must be kept, detailing:

- i. date of extraction;
- ii. temperatures of the hot room and heat exchanger(s) (if used);
- iii. hive sites the extracted honey came from;
- iv. for each batch code; the weight produced, drum number(s), and honey type;
- v. number of honey boxes extracted; and
- vi. signature of the person responsible for the processing that day.

5.5 Testing requirements

5.5.1 Sampling

- a. For bulk honey, a person approved by BioGro must supervise the taking and dispatch of samples to the testing laboratory. This person must supervise:
 - i. taking a 30-50 g sample from each 300 kg drum; and
 - ii. combining these samples into a composite sample, with a maximum of 50 tonne represented by one composite sample; and
 - iii. sending the sample(s) and the testing specification sheet to the testing laboratory(s); and
 - iv. where hives which have been in certified production less than 12 months (either the licensee's own uncertified hives or hives brought in from conventional sources), the sampling of bulk honey from to ensure that these samples are composited and residue tested separately from the other samples.
- b. For cut comb honey, the producer must take a sample from the honey extracted from the unused residue around the cut combs. For comb honey the sample can be taken from the non-marketable portions of comb honey, but must include some honey from each site. BioGro reserves the right to also take samples from packed comb.

5.5.2 Residue tests

- a. All testing must be carried out by BioGro-approved laboratories. Refer to the BioGro Standards *Appendix A: Residue Levels in Certified Products, Water, Soils and Composts*.
- b. The land user statements as specified in section 4.2.5 a., must be collated into a list of all pesticides used over the previous 12 months within the 3 km radius of all approved hive sites that certified honey has been collected from. The testing specification sheet must include tests for:
 - i. multi-herbicide residues; and
 - ii. multi-pesticide residues; and
 - iii. all other pesticides which are declared on the land user statements and are not included in the multi tests.

The testing specification sheet must be signed by the BioGro auditor and included with the sample(s) sent to the testing laboratory.

- c. In the first instance the test result(s) will be received by the licensee, then with the agreement of the licensee, a copy of the test results must be sent by the testing laboratory directly to the BioGro auditor.
- d. Frequency of residue testing
 - i. If hives are situated further than 3 km from conventional agriculture, horticulture or exotic forests, then land user statements must be collected and the composited honey sample(s) must be residue tested for the first 3 years. If over 3 years all land user statements for the 3 km radius area around hive sites show nil or very low use of pesticides and all tests show nil residues, then land user statements and residue tests are only required every 3 years. Random testing from these sites may also be required at BioGro's discretion.
 - ii. If hives are situated 3 km or less from conventional agriculture, horticulture or exotic forests, then land user statements must be collected and the composited honey sample(s) must be residue tested for the first three years, and at least every 3 years after that. After 3 years of clear tests, BioGro will assess the land user information and the land use in the locality of the hives and determine whether the annual testing requirements can be reduced for those sites.

5.5.3 HMF testing

HMF testing is required as specified in section 5.4.4 c.

5.6 Propolis, pollen and other bee products

Certification of these bee products requires compliance with all aspects of this Module and other requirements as may be determined by BioGro. Applicants applying for certification for bee products other than honey must contact BioGro prior to application to determine these requirements



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