

31st March 2011.

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Rural Affairs and Transport
P.O. Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Re: Science Underpinning the Inability to Eradicate the Asian Honeybee

Dear Committee members

I write as the Managing Director of Spring Gully Foods Pty Ltd who has been involved in the honey packing industry since 2002 when it purchased the "Leabrook Farms" honey brand from Coopers Brewery, a local iconic brewery in South Australia. Spring Gully Foods is located in Adelaide South Australia and has been manufacturing food since 1946, for a background on our company please visit www.springgullyfoods.com.au.

Leabrook Farms Honey is a nationally and internationally know brand of high quality honeys packed in our 3500m2 factory in metropolitan Adelaide. We source honey from all over Australia and have endured a harsh period in the honey industry as it faced droughts and pests such as small hive beetle over the past decade. It is now facing a further, more powerful threat, the incursion of the Asian honey bee.

Spring Gully Foods is one of the larger honey packers in Australia and buys honey from over one hundred and eighty bee keepers in all regions. Many of these beekeepers are also crop pollinators and are directly involved in the success of varying crops across the country besides the production of honey. Honey is a small but important part of the food industry in Australia, being eaten directly as a spread or used as an ingredient to naturally flavour our foods. It is used in most cultures around the world and has many health benefits for humans.

Spring Gully employs forty five people directly at its food manufacturing facility in Adelaide and we buy as many components locally where possible from over five hundred suppliers of goods and services. If the honey industry is lost due to the Australian Government taking this issue too lightly, our business, as the other major packers around Australia, would be greatly affected.



NUQUA
TRADITIONAL SPRINGWATER

GARDENER

www.springgullyfoods.com.au

Also affected will be the many beekeeping families that supply us and the industry in general, this is their lively hoods, the lively hood of thousands of families and they will fall on hard times. The social impact on these families will be devastating, the cost is immeasurable on society and the cost to government in social welfare, counselling and retraining these people into other industries will be enormous.

The beekeeping fraternity and the honey packing industry are not the only sectors to be affected if the incursion of the Asian honey bee is left unstopped. As mentioned above many beekeepers are also pollinators and provide a service to many agricultural crops. One of these crops that is important to Australia is Almonds. Some statistics on the Almond industry are...

Total Australian almond acreage has increased six-fold over the past eight years: 4,595 hectares in 2000 to more than 27,300 hectares in 2008. South Australia accounts for approximately 20% of the plantings covering an area of 5,488 hectares.

In 2008, South Australia produced over 8,300 tonnes kernel of almonds, which represents 32% of Australian production of approximately 26,000 tonnes kernel. Australian production is estimated to increase to over 80,000 tonnes by 2015.

The farmgate value of almond production in South Australia is approximately \$57 million and \$180 million in Australia. Additional production from newly planted orchards is expected to increase the Australian industry's value to greater than \$500 million by 2015.

In 2007/2008 the value of Australian exports of shelled almonds was approximately \$50.5m (9,200 tonnes) and for in-shell almonds approximately \$24.3m (5,800 tonnes).

There are about 130-150 almond producers in South Australia and 220-270 in Australia.

Sources: Australian Almonds Statistics 2008 Report – Almond Board of Australia and ABS Agcensus

The example mentioned above is just one crop in Australia that relies on the honey bee industry being well and prosperous. With the advent of a dangerous incursion of the Asian Honey Bee and with the eradication funding being removed as from today the impact on Australia could be potentially very large. We do not want to see our agriculture industry damaged or endure any further hardships and we do not want to see the food manufacturing sector suffer.

A small cost to Government now will have a huge saving to government in the long term both financially and socially. We need to resurrect the funding program for the eradication of the Asian Honey Bee now and not put off what could be potentially devastating to parts of the agriculture industry, the beekeeping community, manufacturing sector and the ability to produce our own food on our own shores.

I urge this committee to pressure Government to help our industry by reinstating the funding to stop this Asian Honey Bee incursion.

Yours faithfully

Kevin G. Webb
Managing Director.