

WA HONEY BEE INDUSTRY CONSULTATION OVERVIEW AND INPUT TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN MAY 2022

The APC Beekeepers Producers' Committee commissioned an industry review that will help develop a Strategic Plan to guide the future direction of the Western Australian bee, honey and pollination industry.

The first stage of the project produced a comprehensive **Review and Analysis of the global, Australian and Western Australian market situation** for the honey bee and pollination industries (July 2021). The second stage completed an extensive **Beekeeper Consultation** to gauge current expectations and aspirations for the WA industry (March 2022), followed by a broader **Industry Stakeholders Consultation** (April 2022) which engaged packers, wholesalers, retailers and researchers.

This overview consolidates the key challenges and opportunities identified from this process to include in the WA Honey Bee and Pollination Industry Strategic Plan 2022-2025.

*An Initiative Proudly Funded by the APC
Beekeeper Producers' Committee*



Key Strategies Identified by Industry

The key challenges and opportunities identified in the industry review can be addressed in five key strategy areas:

Grow existing honey businesses

– build capacity, productivity/efficiency, markets and resource access.

Raise consumer loyalty to WA honey

– marketing/promotion of WA honey's unique features, products.



Build industry resilience

– biosecurity management, targeted R&D, quality and integrity systems.

Support industry leadership and cohesion

– secure funding for 'industry good' functions, employ an EO, implement strategies to advance industry, improve advocacy, engagement and communication, source and analyse industry data.

Engage hobbyist beekeepers

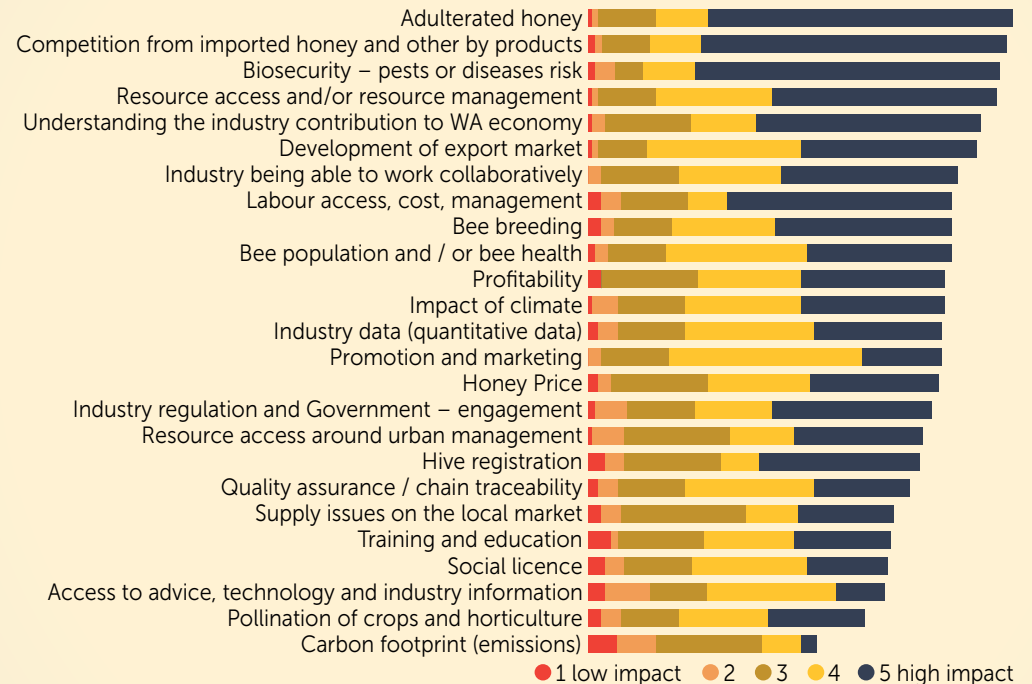
– training, biosecurity, standards/regulation, transition to commercial.

Challenges

The consultation identified that the WA honey and bee industry is perceived as fragmented across industry groups resulting in duplication and mixed messaging to government, there's limited engagement with stakeholders, the industry lacks market focus and industry standards which impacts product integrity in domestic and international markets, beekeepers have issues with resource access and management of apiary sites, and the competitive nature impacts industry development and cooperation between commercial and hobbyist beekeepers. Beekeepers are most concerned about biosecurity; imported and adulterated honey, and the lack of industry collaboration.

Honey industry stakeholders are most challenged by the lack of industry standards and standardised testing for TA levels; inconsistencies in honey supply and pricing; ignorance of legislation and fraudulent activity; lack of engagement and collaboration with industry stakeholders.

Rated challenges for WA Bee Industry



Opportunities

Opportunities were identified for the industry to become a more collaborative and professional industry that can increase the productivity and profitability of Western Australian beekeepers and the broader industry, and increase the contribution to the State's economy.

Consolidation of industry groups and collaboration of industry advocacy and development through a properly resourced peak industry body that represents the interests of commercial and hobbyist beekeepers and provides one voice to government is seen as the priority by all sectors of the industry.

Most respondents want BICWA to be the peak industry body to represent all sectors of industry with professional management by a skills-based board and a paid employee, not volunteers. The APC, given its statutory obligations, would continue to collect funds through the FFS to fund R&D and biosecurity. WAAS has a key role to represent the interests of hobbyist beekeepers, provide information, training and a social network so that group's future is viewed as paramount to support hobbyist beekeepers for the benefit of the wider industry.

The majority of respondents support employment of a Bee Industry Executive Officer to professionalise the industry: represent industry interests; lobby government; drive industry development; create momentum for funding opportunities and take the WA honey and bee industry to the next level. Ideas from stakeholders to fund industry development and an Executive Officer include an increase in the APC FFS, improving hive registration levels, government funding or in kind support, stakeholders and grants.



Opportunities for the WA Honey Bee Industry



Opportunities

Priorities for the peak body to address were identified as greater promotion and marketing of WA honey and bee products; advocacy for better resource access and management; paid pollination of horticultural crops; and a dedicated queen bee breeding program.

WA currently has a strategic advantage in its biosecurity status and its clean image with honey that has high medicinal properties. This could be captured in an industry led marketing campaign to educate consumers and promote WA honey and its medicinal value, health benefits and provenance to improve competitiveness against cheaper products.

Opportunity exists in paid pollination services with massive growth in the avocado and horticultural industry increasing demand for beekeepers to meet the pollination requirements of crops in the future. Industry needs to educate the horticultural industry on the benefits of bees for pollination and their ability to increase yields, with data and research required to back that claim.

There is opportunity for queen bee breeding to supply the local, national and export markets as demand is high and supply is low, and also in breeding disease and pest resistant bees to ensure the ongoing viability of the industry.

Other opportunities include WA specific targeted research; training and education; production of other by-products; establishment of an irradiation plant in WA; export market development; and the development of industry standards on the Total Activity (TA) of honey.

A range of research ideas were raised which include more research on the properties of WA honey and its medicinal value ; resource management, burning frequency and its effect on species diversity and alternative ways to conduct burn offs, and research to address biosecurity issues. There is opportunity for greater collaboration and engagement with researchers.

Production figures for the WA honey and bee industry are not currently collected via a central mechanism so limited data is available to advocate for industry initiatives, investment and development. The current hive registration process, through DPIRD, was suggested as a collection mechanism or industry could develop a self reporting mechanism to collect the information though accuracy could still be an issue. With the potential identified for growth in the WA industry, there is concern there may not be enough hives and beekeepers to meet industry demand for honey and pollination services, which may drive stakeholders to source honey from other states or blend imported and Australian honey to meet market demand.

Improved industry structure and management

