

November 2024

Submission to Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Standing Senate Committee

National Organic Standard Bill 2024

Executive Summary

- AHBIC generally supports the Organic Standard Bill as presented
- We oppose the exemption for sales revenues below \$25,000 as this undermines the rest of our industry
- AHBIC requests that the National Standard for Organic and Bio-Dynamic Produce be reviewed in relation to honey bees to ensure suitability for our industry

Introduction

The Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC) is an independent, not for profit, national peak industry body. AHBIC has been protecting and promoting the Honey Bee and Pollination industry for more than 23 years. AHBIC represents beekeepers and members of the Australian beekeeping industry to all levels of government, private enterprise and the public. AHBIC's member bodies include membership-based beekeeping groups from:

- All states of Australia
- Specialist Pollination groups
- Specialist Queen Bee Breeders
- Those who buy, package and market our honey
- Representatives of the expanding recreational beekeeping sector

The Australian Honey Bee industry is a strong and vibrant industry that generated \$640 million in farm gate value in 2023 and contributes billions to the greater agricultural sector through pollination services. Organic honey is a small but important sector of our industry. It is largely unregulated for domestic trade.





Australian Honey Bee Industry Council Inc

Website: www.HoneyBee.org.au

Support for the National Organics Bill 2024

AHBIC generally supports the bill as presented. However, we recognise and acknowledge that once implemented it will have an impact on many honey producers. Our industry is made up of commercial beekeepers (2,000) and many smaller recreational beekeepers (47,000+). The growing trend of recreational producers is to sell direct to consumers, and in an unregulated market, label claims can lead to consumer confusion. Defining the term 'organic' will provide a legislative instrument to ensure only certified organic produce reach the consumers.

\$25,000 threshold

Whilst we are supportive of the bill in our view the \$25,000 threshold is too high and undermines the intent. Generally, in the honey bee industry, uncertified label claims often come from the smaller producers or recreational beekeepers. Smaller producers are still able to have product on the same shelf and compete for the same consumer dollar as the large commercial packers. Allowing a loophole which will create unfair competition and will undermine the intent of the legislation and deter larger producers and packers to invest in organic certification.

AHBIC supports the removal of the \$25,000 exemption clause.

Revision of the National Standard for Organic and Bio-Dynamic Produce

The current standard for bee products needs to be reviewed to ensure it is still fit-for-purpose. Feedback to AHBIC has included the current restrictive standard deters producers from seeking top-tier organic certification instead seeking alternative lower-level certification.

A review of this standard for bee products with a truly inclusive consultation process will ensure industry engagement and a standard that is fit-for-purpose. This needs to be done as a matter of urgency regardless of the success of the proposed bill.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We appreciate your support in helping us secure the future of this vital sector.

Yours sincerely,

Danny Le Feuvre
Chief Executive Officer

