

HONEYBEE INDUSTRY

Australia produced around \$53 million of honey in 2001-02

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The honeybee industry is an important Australian industry. However, only limited information is available on the industry. In particular, little information is available on the physical, financial and socioeconomic characteristics of honey producing businesses. The Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) and the Australian Honeybee Industry Council commissioned ABARE to conduct a comprehensive survey of Australian honeybee businesses in 2001. A comprehensive analysis of the survey results is available in the *Honeybee Industry Report* (Boero Rodríguez et al. 2003) available from RIRDC.

Physical characteristics and honey production

Australia has around 9600 registered beekeepers, but the majority of honey is produced by a relatively small number of honeybee businesses (table 1). Sixty-two per cent of total honey production is estimated to have come from businesses operating more than 500 hives — or around 250 businesses. Only 16 per cent of Australian honey output is produced by businesses with up to 250 hives.

1 Number of registered apiarists, by state, 2002 ^a

		Australia	New South Wales	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	Tasmania
Apiarists with less than 50 hives								
Apiarists	no.	8 015	2 624	1 126	2 659	587	810	209
Hives	no.	76 026	22 582	10 084	31 583	4 536	5 583	1 658
Apiarists	%	83.3	83.2	76.8	87.8	74.3	87.0	82.0
Hives	%	15.5	13.8	10.6	27.5	7.0	16.0	9.3
Apiarists with 50 hives or more								
Apiarists	no.	1 607	529	340	368	203	121	46
Hives	no.	414 827	140 967	84 728	83 277	60 451	29 231	16 173
Apiarists	%	16.7	16.8	23.2	12.2	25.7	13.0	18.0
Hives	%	84.5	86.2	89.4	72.5	93.0	84.0	90.7
Total registered apiarists								
Apiarists	no.	9 622	3 153	1 466	3 027	790	931	255
Hives	no.	490 853	163 549	94 812	114 860	64 987	34 814	17 831
Apiarists	%	100	33	15	31	8	10	3
Hives	%	100	33	19	23	13	7	4

^a Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory not included.

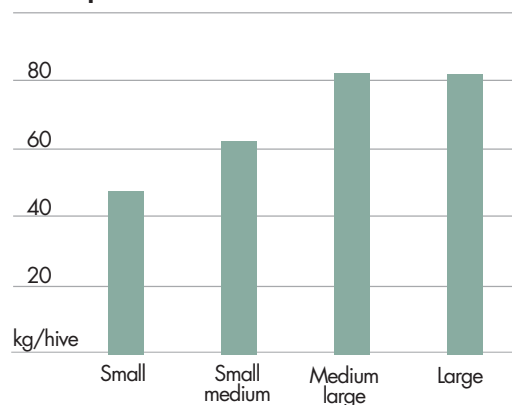
Australian honeybee businesses produced an average of 17 300 kilograms of honey per business in 2000-01. At the national level, beekeepers produced an average of 67 kilograms of honey per hive operated in 2000-01. Small businesses — those with up to 250 hives — produced an average of 48 kilograms of honey per hive operated while the medium-large and large groups produced around 82 kilograms per hive operated (figure A).

Financial performance

Most honeybee operations are small, family owned and operated businesses with fewer than 500 hives. These businesses depend on a range of income sources in addition to those related to beekeeping. Typically, smaller operations, particularly those with less than 250 hives, derive most of their family income from other sources — for example, other business enterprises, investment or government sourced income. Larger operations (with more than 500 hives) are mainly dependent on the honeybee business as the source of family income.

Businesses received an average of \$32 800 for honey sales in the 2000-01 financial year. Prices received for honey averaged \$1.80 per kilogram nationally, but average prices received by

A Honey production per hive, by size of operations



Tasmanian producers were almost double this price, at \$3.40 per kilogram.

Total cash receipts per business averaged \$46 000, including receipts from the sale of bees, wax, propolis, honeycomb and paid pollination services. Cash costs per business averaged \$30 600, around 67 per cent of total cash receipts, leaving a cash operating surplus of \$15 400 per business (table 2).

Average rates of return were small for honeybee businesses because of their small size, on average (table 2). In fact, rates of return are similar to those recorded for small farms in broad-acre and dairy industries. For larger honeybee businesses, however, rates of return are relatively high. Around 10 per cent of honeybee businesses, mainly larger businesses, generated rates of return of more than 10 per cent, which is relatively high for businesses in the agricultural sector.

Equity ratios for honeybee businesses were relatively high, averaging 89 per cent at 30 June 2001. Average total business debt was only \$25 400 and 40 per cent of businesses had no debt.

2 Financial performance, 2000-01 Australian honeybee businesses

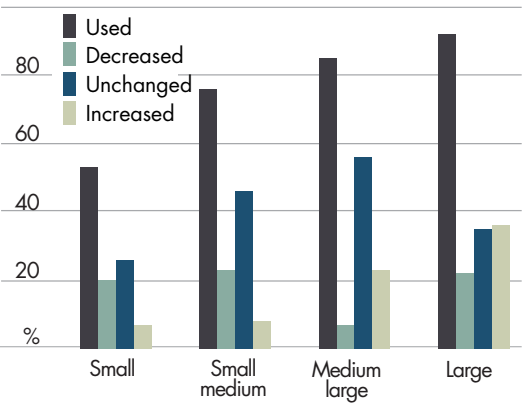
	Average per business		
Total cash receipts	\$	46 002	(7)
Total cash costs	\$	30 604	(7)
Cash operating surplus	\$	15 398	(12)
less depreciation	\$	7 572	(5)
less total imputed labor	\$	22 645	(5)
plus buildup in trading stocks	\$	1 101	(90)
Return to capital and management	\$	-13 719	(17)
Return at full equity to capital and management	\$	-11 816	(20)
Rate of return	%	-5.0	(19)

Note: Figures in parentheses are standard errors, expressed as percentages of the estimates. A guide to interpreting these is included in 'Survey methods and definitions'.

Use of public land

Over 60 per cent of beekeepers had used public land for honey production in the past five years. Larger operations produced more of their honey from public lands than had smaller ones in 2000-01. The proportion of large honeybee businesses using public land was 90 per cent, while only 53

B Use of public land for honey production in the last five years, by size of operations



per cent of small businesses had used public land (figure B).

Nationally, around 19 per cent of honeybee businesses reported that their use of public land had fallen. However, the use of public land had increased for 10 per cent of businesses —mainly larger businesses that produced large quantities of honey. Around a third of honeybee businesses reported their use of public land had not changed in the past five years.

Gross value of production and employment

The survey results lead to an estimate of total Australian honey production in 2000-01 of approximately 27 800 tonnes. In addition, the total gross value of the honeybee industry in 2000-01 is estimated to have been around \$63 million. This estimate includes around \$53 million for honey production, \$3.3 million for paid pollination services, \$3.3 million for queen bee sales and around \$2.5 million for propolis, wax and honeycomb production.

Total industry employment in the honeybee industry, excluding casual employees and family labor below 16 years of age, is estimated to be around 3000 people.

Reference

Boero Rodriguez, V., Riley, C., Shafron, W. and Lindsay, R. 2003, *Honeybee Industry Report*, Rural Industries Research Corporation, Canberra.