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Press Release

European honey producers are sounding the alarm in the face of a distressing market situation and call for an emergency action plan to be put in place.

Faced by a market situation deemed to be critical, the European honey producers and Copa-Cogeca members are launching an appeal from Brussels to the European authorities today in order get a strong and rapid response. This call is accompanied by an [action plan](#) proposing concrete measures to allow for more than 650,000 European beekeepers to keep their heads above water. In the wake of a highly complicated year in 2019, the stakes are high and today it is the viability itself of the European beekeeping sector that is at risk. This could irreversibly erode the EU's self-sufficiency in honey.

2019 was a bleak year for European beekeeping. There was no hike in prices following the drop in honey production in the main producing and exporting countries in the south and east of the EU which was caused by poor climatic conditions. This abnormal market situation cannot be dismissed as an economic problem. Indeed, since 2013 European producers have been battling with increasing imports at low prices notably from China (average price: 1.24 €/kg in 2019). Our producers cannot align themselves with such prices. The average production costs in the EU were at 3.90€/kg in 2018. This difference in prices can only be explained by the major addition of sugar syrup which is cheaper for production and difficult to detect during border controls in Europe and by a definition and honey production method in China that does not conform to European standards.

According to Etienne Bruneau, Chair of the Copa-Cogeca Working Party on Honey, *“If the market situation does not improve, the European beekeepers who derive a significant part of their income from beekeeping will not be able to continue. This threatens the existence of more than 10 million beehives throughout the EU. Yet, beekeeping and the pollination services it provides, together with wild pollinators, are essential for European farming and horticulture as well as biodiversity. This situation therefore threatens other sectors in addition to our own.”*

In this urgent context, the Copa-Cogeca Working Party on Honey is putting forward a well thought-out action plan. Among these proposals, the European organisation requires the EU in the short term to ensure that any honey imported from third countries conforms to the EU's definition of honey, most notably for honey coming from China. In addition to this first request, origin labelling should be introduced on all blends of honey, thus supporting the statement made by the majority of Member States on this topic during the Agriculture and Fisheries Council on 27th January 2020.

In order to strengthen controls, Copa-Cogeca also calls on the Commission to launch a new coordinated control plan with Member States which would target the imports of batches of

honey exceeding 20 tonnes coming from third countries. Copa-Cogeca also calls for a European reference laboratory for honey to be created in close collaboration with the Joint Research Centre as well as a European honey market observatory.

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