Canadian **BEEKEEPERS** Federation

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Ottawa promised food security and left beekeepers out of it.

Now tariffs are drying up beekeepers' income

OTTAWA, August 28, 2026 - Canada launched its first National Food Security Strategy on June 11, backed by more than $3 billion over ten years and built on four objectives. The words bee, pollination and honey do not appear in it. Ten weeks later, on August 22, a 50 per cent American tariff took effect on Canadian honey. How can the government deliver food security when it does not count all the ingredients?

Pollination is one of the most significant inputs in Canadian agriculture.

The strategy does not mention it once.

> *"Three billion dollars for food security, four objectives, and not one line about pollination. More things than tariffs need to change for food security in Canada. Test for fake honey coming into Canada, all countries should provide a comprehensive analysis to prove origin. Until this happens beekeepers need emergency support to continue pollinating Canada's food."*
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> **Connie Phillips, Executive Director, Canadian Beekeepers Federation**

Bees are missing from the entire strategy. Its fourth objective promises faster approvals for seeds, feed, fertilizers and veterinary products, and leaves off pollination, which is how those seeds happen in the first place. The document commits $750 million to expanding year-round production of fruits and vegetables. Where do the seeds come from if there are no beekeepers? That seed establishes the pasture and hay behind Canada's dairy, beef, sheep and goat herds. That seed puts vegetables and fruits on the table.

The beekeeping industry has been under strain for decades. Hive losses run higher than beekeepers can sustainably replace. Mites are a permanent cost and a permanent management burden. Both drag down what a colony produces, and the price of honey has not kept pace with what it costs to make it. Beekeeping is not profitable enough under those conditions for beekeepers to keep operating. Many have sold out in recent years, and nobody is replacing them.

Canada does not have colonies to spare, so pollination runs on transport. The margins do not support building more colonies, so growers bring bees in from across the country because they cannot get them locally: blueberries in British Columbia and the Maritimes, tree fruit and vegetables in Ontario, Quebec and the Fraser Valley. The seed crops need them too. Honey bees set the hybrid canola seed grown in southern Alberta, the clover seed that goes into pasture and hay for Canadian livestock, and the vegetable seed that plants next year's crop.

Hives need to move across provincial borders. A move needs an import permit from the receiving province, transit permits for the provinces in between, and an inspection, and each province sets its own criteria. When the approvals do not line up, the bees do not get to where they are needed. The provinces need to adopt a common set of standards to ensure confusion doesn't stop pollination. So that paperwork doesn't consume beekeepers time when they need to be out there making food.

Canada needs to be a united country where trade between provinces is not restrictive. Parliament passed a law in January saying a good accepted in one province should be accepted in another, and the food security strategy promises to help a product made in one province reach a shelf in another. Bees were left out of both. One set of inspection rules, published ahead of time and good in every province, would put them back in.

Honey is the largest category of fraudulent food the CFIA finds.

Last year the agency kept 133,420 kg of fake honey off the Canadian market. That is out of just over 150,000 kg of fraudulent food of every kind it stopped. Honey is not one item on that list. It is almost the whole list. And most of it never reaches a store shelf as honey. It arrives in drums and goes into sauces, baked goods and bars. It is the honey in your honey mustard, and nothing on the label tells you where it came from.

It costs $378 to run a hive for a year, and honey has not paid it back for years. That is Alberta's published figure. At the province's average crop of 101 pounds a hive, honey has to sell for $3.74 a pound to cover it. Before the tariff it was selling at roughly two thirds of that. For the two years before that it was about $2, just over half. Beekeepers have been losing between $110 and $180 a year on every colony, and the cost of keeping that colony has more than doubled since 2016. The tariff landed on an industry already running at a loss. Indian honey lands in Canada at $1.71 a pound and Thai honey at $1.72, 54 per cent below what production costs here. Beekeepers in those countries are saying what Canadian beekeepers are saying. India's Centre for Science and Environment found sugar syrup in 77 per cent of the honey samples it tested, and Indian beekeepers reported the fake product driving prices below what it costs them to keep bees. A landed price below what production costs is the clearest signal available that the product is not pure honey. In the CFIA's most recent round every honey sample that failed was imported, and every Canadian sample passed.

Canada's own tariff on American honey lands on September 8, and it will do nothing. Ottawa has matched the Americans with 50 per cent on natural honey. Most of what Canada is about to tariff is not American honey at all. It is other countries' honey carrying American paperwork, bought by Canadian ingredient processors who will change suppliers the week the tariff lands and carry on. The tariff will cost them a phone call.

The answer is testing, not tariffs. Beekeepers do not need protection from authentic honey. They need protection from fraud, and testing delivers it. Canada tests a fraction of what enters the country: 81 honey samples last year, against 10,452 tonnes of imports. Scaling that up, and running mass spectrometry alongside the isotope and nuclear magnetic resonance testing already in use, would find the fraudulent product without putting a single new tariff on anyone.

The Federation is asking the Government of Canada to:

- **Raise the Advance Payments Program interest-free limit for honey producers to a level that reflects what it costs to run a commercial operation for a year,** and extend repayment until the crop is sold, the tariff is lifted and proper testing is put in place. This or another emergency program has to be in place so beekeepers can go on pollinating Canada's crops.
- **Give beekeepers one set of inspection rules that every province accepts,** published ahead of time, so a disease finding in one colony does not strand a shipment past the bloom it was booked for.
- **Expand honey authenticity testing at CFIA** to a scale that matches the import trade, and run mass spectrometry alongside the isotope and NMR methods already in use, so a syrup built to pass one test is caught by another.
- **Name pollination in the delivery of the National Food Security Strategy,** alongside seeds, feed and fertilizers.

None of this requires a new fund or a new statute. Beekeepers will survive if they are given a level playing field.

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