

The Consumer as the Harvester: Disrupting Honey's Supply Chain

Author: Simon Mildren
Affiliation: HiveKeepers, Australia

Background & Purpose

At HiveKeepers we set out to challenge one of the long-standing norms in the honey industry: the distance between the person who harvests the honey and the person who enjoys it.

While much innovation in beekeeping has focused on hive monitoring and bee health, we realised the actual process of extracting honey and getting it into the hands of consumers had remained largely unchanged. It's a model filled with unnecessary steps, added costs and too many opportunities for contamination or adulteration.

We asked ourselves:

What if the person enjoying the honey could also be the one harvesting it?



Simplicity without compromise



Consumer connected harvesting



New model for honey sales and distribution

The Problem

- Traditional supply chains rely on multiple intermediaries, adding cost and reducing transparency
- Extraction methods can be time-consuming, messy and inefficient for small-scale producers
- Consumers are completely disconnected from the source of their honey
- Quality honey producers have limited ways to differentiate their honey or reach their customers directly

Methodology

We set about creating a system that could bring honey harvesting closer to the consumer without compromising quality, safety or the wellbeing of the bees.

The result is HiveKeepers' patent-protected harvesting system, developed through extensive testing, collaboration with beekeepers and feedback from early users. The system was designed around three key principles:

- **Simplicity** – Make harvesting intuitive and fast for anyone, whether you are a beekeeper or honey consumer
- **Purity** – Minimise handling and eliminate common contamination risks
- **Connection** – Create a direct line between producer and consumer that enhances trust and story-sharing

Results & Findings

- Honey harvesting is drastically simplified – Beekeepers can extract small amounts of honey on the spot without the need for bulky equipment
- Intermediaries are removed – Consumers can harvest and enjoy honey straight from the source
- Purity is preserved – With no filtering or processing required, the honey stays clean and true to its original form
- Trust is increased – Consumers can witness or participate in the harvest, deepening their connection to the beekeeper and the bees

Opportunities for Beekeepers

- **New revenue opportunities** – Supports direct-to-consumer models and small-batch premium offerings
- **Market differentiation** – Beekeepers can offer harvest-as-you-go experiences or sell honey still sealed in its original cassette
- **Lower barriers to entry** – Reduces the need for expensive extraction infrastructure
- **Better storytelling** – Enables provenance-driven marketing and stronger customer engagement

Challenges Ahead

Shifting the industry mindset from bulk production to small-batch, consumer-connected harvesting comes with challenges:

- **Changing habits takes time** – Beekeepers and consumers alike need education and reassurance
- **Regulations are designed for traditional systems** – There are hurdles around labelling, processing and sale of unprocessed honey
- **Scaling requires coordination** – Adoption depends on accessible tools, consistent support and proof that this model works at different scales

Conclusion

HiveKeepers is rethinking what it means to harvest honey. By putting the power of extraction into the hands of the beekeeper and even the consumer, we're helping build a new model for honey production. It's one that values simplicity, transparency and the joy of real, fresh honey.



www.hivekeepers.com



PP-200 [Beekeeping Technology and Quality]
The Consumer as the Harvester: Disrupting Honey's Supply Chain

Simon Mildren
Simon Mildren, Melbourne, Australia

Background/PURPOSE:
Innovation in beekeeping has primarily focused on AI and sensor technology, significantly improving hive monitoring and colony health. However, these advancements have yet to address a fundamental challenge, disrupting the honey supply chain itself to enhance transparency, efficiency, and consumer engagement.

Problem Description:
Despite technological progress, the industry continues to grapple with issues such as honey fraud, inefficient extraction methods, and limited consumer involvement in harvesting. These challenges not only impact honey purity but also create barriers to a more transparent and sustainable supply chain.

METHODOLOGY:
This study explores the potential of HiveKeepers' patented system technology, which allows beekeepers and consumers to take an active role in honey harvesting. Through controlled trials and user feedback, we assess its impact on extraction efficiency, product authenticity and supply chain dynamics.

Results & CONCLUSION: The HiveKeepers system simplifies honey extraction, eliminating unnecessary intermediaries while preserving purity and authenticity. Our findings indicate that this approach enhances beekeeper efficiency, reduces opportunities for honey adulteration, and fosters a direct connection between producers and consumers. Early adoption suggests a significant improvement in supply chain transparency and consumer trust.

Practical Implications for Beekeepers:
By shifting honey harvesting closer to the consumer, this innovation creates new opportunities for beekeepers, including alternative revenue streams, direct-to-consumer sales models and increased market differentiation. This reimagined approach to honey production has the potential to reshape the industry, making it more resilient, sustainable, and consumer-driven.