BEEKEEPING ECONOMY

PP-468 [Beekeeping Economy]

TRACING THE ORIGINS OF HONEY: A STUDY OF PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PRACTICES IN SLOVENIAN SCHOOL CANTEENS

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BACKGROUND

FOLLOW ME

- School meals play a vital role in children's nutrition, **covering up to 70% of a student's daily energy intake.**
- National public procurement legislation for educational institutions promote locally sourced food, requires a **minimum of 15% organic food** and **a minimum of 20% food from certified quality schemes.**
- **Honey, a staple in Slovenian cuisine,** is a significant component of school meals, particularly in morning snacks.
- The strong **emphasis on price in public procurement could limit the inclusion of local, high-quality Slovenian honey** in school meals, despite legislative encouragement.

OBJECTIVE

To investigate the procurement practices for honey in Slovenian elementary schools, determining the proportion of local, organic, and quality scheme honey being sourced.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted using:
(A) Structured questionnaire on food procurement
- Distributed to all Slovenian elementary schools (N=488), 157 valid responses

(B) One-month (20 days) menu analysis
- 100 publicly available school menus analyzed and frequency of honey's inclusion in meals assessed

HONEY IS ONE OF THE MOST FREQUENTLY PURCHASED LOCAL PRODUCTS, BESIDE FRUIT, VEGETABLES AND MILK.

CONCLUSION

- Slovenian elementary schools demonstrate a **clear and dominant preference for locally produced honey.**
- The **direct sourcing model is highly effective for honey**, as nearly three-quarters of schools procure it directly from beekeepers.

The results confirm that schools are a significant and reliable market for Slovenian beekeepers.

RESULTS

FREQUENCY OF HONEY ON SCHOOL MENUS

78% at least once a month
33% at least twice a month

Most common use: As a spread (with or without butter) and as a sweetener for tea.

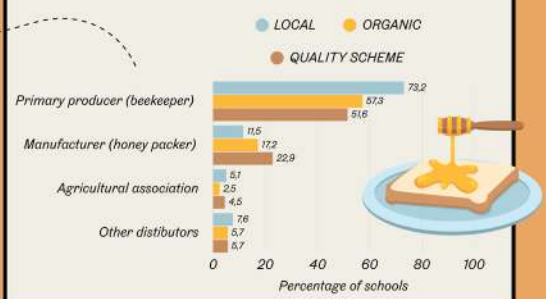
HONEY PROCUREMENT BY TYPE

A high percentage of schools opt to purchase honey with added value:

89% LOCAL HONEY
76% QUALITY SCHEMES HONEY
75% ORGANIC HONEY

THE GAP: PURCHASING VS. MENU LABELING
Despite the high rates of procurement, this information is rarely communicated on the school menus.

SOURCING CHANNELS FOR HONEY



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Tracing the Origins of Honey: A Study of Public Procurement Practices in Slovenian School Canteens

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Background/purpose
Slovenian elementary schools must provide a morning snack that meets national dietary guidelines in educational institutions and promotes food diversity. These meals, along with breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack, cover about 70% of a student's daily intake. Public procurement laws mandate 15% organic food, encourage local sourcing, and require 20% to be certified under quality schemes. Honey, a staple in Slovenian cuisine, holds an important place in school meals, particularly in morning snacks.

Problem description
Due to the emphasis on price in public procurement, local Slovenian honey may not be as widely represented as it could be. To investigate this, a structured questionnaire on food procurement practices was sent to 450 schools in Slovenia. Responses were received from 157 schools, and the frequency of honey inclusion was additionally assessed from one-month menus of 100 schools.

Results and conclusion
Honey was offered at least once a month in 78% of schools and at least twice a month in 33%. It was most commonly used as a spread, sometimes mixed with butter or served with tea. According to the questionnaire, honey is one of the most frequently purchased local products, along with fruit, vegetables and milk. Specifically, 89% of schools buy locally produced honey, 75.8% buy honey from quality schemes, 75.2% buy organic honey and 4% buy none of these. Despite the frequent purchase of local or organic honey, only 17% of menus identified local honey, 4% organic honey and 1% honey from a quality scheme. Of the schools that purchased local honey, 75.2% bought it directly from beekeepers, 11.8% from honey companies or distributors, 5.2% from agricultural cooperatives and 7.8% from other suppliers. Similarly, 69.2% of organic honey was purchased directly, while quality scheme honey was less frequently purchased directly from beekeepers (61.4%).

Practical implications for beekeepers
The results highlight a strong preference for locally produced honey in Slovenian elementary schools, most of which obtain honey directly from beekeepers, though this is not clearly indicated on menus. Strengthening relationships between schools and beekeepers will help ensure consistent access to high-quality, locally produced honey in school nutrition programs.