



Protected Geographical Indication Miel de Galicia: Preserving Quality, Identity, and Origin of honey

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Background

"Miel de Galicia" is a designation of origin and a quality label for the honey produces in Galicia (Northwest Spain). Due to the relevance of honey production and the reputation given by consumers since ancient times, this designation was locally recognized in 1988. In 2007, the label "Miel de Galicia" has been recognized and registered as a "Geographical Indication" at the European Union level.

Beekeeping in Galicia is a sector with a rich tradition and great honey quality. Despite current challenges, the region continues to be a benchmark for high-quality honey, supported by the commitment of beekeepers and the trust of consumers. Cultural heritage elements and historic documents support the tradition of honey production in the area.



The protected area covers a surface of 29.574 km² at the Northwest of the Iberian peninsula. It is an Autonomous community characterized for rural areas and beautiful natural landscapes. Agriculture inland and fisheries in the coast are the main source of income for families.



More information:
<https://mieldeg Galicia.org>



PGI Miel de Galicia specific label



Some honey resources in the protected area

The main melliferous sources are extensive deciduous forests dominated by chestnut and oak trees, alongside shrublands with *Erica* on mountain slopes, as well as brambles in agricultural lands. Coastal areas are mainly covered by eucalyptus forests.



A) "Albariza" traditional apiary, B) "Lacena" apiary inside a house



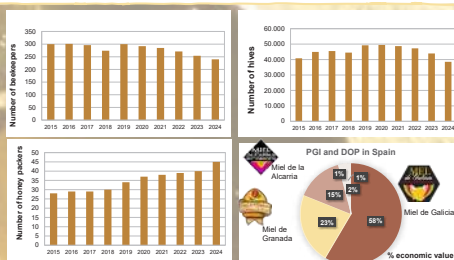
C) Codex Calixtinus (S. XII) which mentions Galician honey
D) Family crests, referring honey bees and beekeeping.

Problem description and methodology



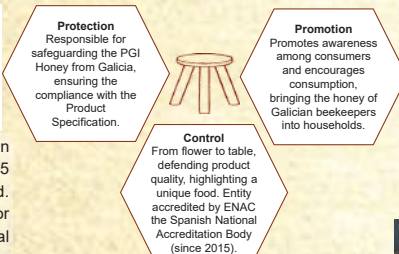
Globalization promotes trade in undifferentiated products, favoring the appearance of frauds. In this context, EU quality food policy aims to protect the names of specific products to promote their unique characteristics, linked to their geographical origin as well as traditional know-how. Due to the healthy properties attributed to honey and the value of this product in rural areas, the establishment of geographical labels allows its valorization. This paper analyzes the role of the PGI Miel de Galicia in the beekeeping sector almost 40 years after its creation.

Results and practical implications



The beekeeping sector in the area faces important challenges such as the presence of the invasive Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) and climate change affecting flowering and honey bees behavior. Honey yield is around 15-20 kg per hive with an estimated honey production covered by the PGI Miel de Galicia around 700,000 kg. The honey is sold in bulks or bottled identified with the label. The estimated economic value is 5 million euros.

Different activities of PGI Miel de Galicia



Currently, the PGI Miel de Galicia covers nearly 40,000 hives in almost 1,000 apiaries, 60 registered trademarks and 45 packaging companies, most of them small and medium-sized. Over the existence of this quality label, the beekeeping sector has undergone a transformation toward better technical capabilities and greater professionalization. This quality scheme has acted as a trigger for beekeeping, leading to an increase in production capacity, as well as an increase in the number of small honey packers. It is the most important geographical indication for honey in Spain.

The Regulatory Council is the entity responsible for this quality scheme and carries out the administrative and legal functions, in addition to those indicated in the chart.

Acknowledgements



The authors thank the Galician beekeepers whose dedication and expertise make possible a unique product closely linked to our land.

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BACKGROUND: Honey is an agricultural product closely connected to the geographical area of origin, since environment, flora, honey bee type and hive management determine its botanical, sensory and physicochemical properties. In addition to provide pollination services, beekeeping plays a vital role in the rural economy and the cultural heritage of many areas around the world. In the case of Galicia (Northwest Spain), it is an Atlantic beekeeping, with small apiaries, located mainly in mountainous and forest areas. Due to the significance of honey production in this area and the reputation given by consumers, the quality label "Mel de Galicia" was officially recognized in 1988. Since 2007, Miel de Galicia has been registered in the EU geographical indications system as a "Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) Miel de Galicia".

PROBLEM DESCRIPTION: Globalization promotes trade in undifferentiated products, favoring the appearance of frauds. Due to the healthy properties attributed to honey and the value of this product in rural areas, the establishment of geographical labels allows its valorization.

METHODOLOGY: This paper analyzes the role of the PGI Miel de Galicia in the beekeeping sector almost 40 years after its creation.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION: The PGI Miel de Galicia protects the honey production of Galicia safeguarding this product against potential frauds. Currently, the PGI Miel de Galicia covers nearly 40,000 hives in almost 1,000 apiaries, 60 registered trademarks and 45 packaging companies, most of them small and medium-sized. Over the existence of this quality label, the beekeeping sector has undergone a transformation toward better technical capabilities and greater professionalization. This quality scheme has acted as a trigger for beekeeping, leading to an increase in production capacity, as well as an increase in the number of producers and packers. Furthermore, geographical indications promote clear and differentiated labelling, serve as a quality reference, protect against frauds in origin, promote the consumption of local foods and guarantee the traceability of honey, as well as preserving beekeeping traditions and contributing to rural development.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR BEEKEEPERS: This communication highlights the value of geographical indications (PDO and PGI) in enhancing the reputation of honey and promoting beekeeping.