AgriFutures Australia

Media Release

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Renewed partnership to benefit the Australian Manuka Industry

AgriFutures Australia has welcomed the opportunity for an ongoing partnership with ManukaLife, collaborating to provide a further opportunity for the Australian Manuka industry to enter the high-grade Manuka honey market.

AgriFutures Australia, in partnership with ManukaLife will deliver the *project Greenhouse production of high-grade medical mono floral Manuka honey – 2021*. This project aims to produce the world's first high grade mono floral Manuka honey. This will be achieved by integrating honey bees into green houses with plants trialed in the *project Leptospermum Plant Breeding Program for Development of High-grade Manuka Honey*. By containing both the Leptospermum plants and the honey bee within the greenhouse, it will allow for high-grade, 'pure' Manuka honey production.

Managing Director of ManukaLife, Paul Callander is extremely pleased to have the support of AgriFutures Australia for this important work for the Manuka honey industry.

"To have Federal Government support for a technology and science driven elite agricultural product is very encouraging," he said.

"The research project is confirmation that the last five years of research and development on elite clonal genetics will allow us to look at large scale commercialisation in enclosed infrastructure, to produce high grade product with scientific backing, that will result in value add products in the pharmaceutical and medical industries."

"Currently, Manuka honey in its purest form is hard to secure as most manuka honey is collected from the wild or in field and will typically be diluted with other nectars.

"From an agricultural perspective, to grow this plant in large, enclosed areas will de risk some of the agricultural issues and still provide high internal rates of return on the plantings.

"Using key technologies to monitor water, temperature and soils are all ways to increase yield in an environmentally conscious way while also monitoring bee health.

"We will also be able to ensure we have sufficient supply chains of high strength manuka honey for global use in pharmaceutical and medical product distribution channels," said Mr Callander.

While the use of large-scale enclosed environments in the realm of Australian agriculture is not a new concept, there are some key differences and innovations within this project.

“Whilst these environments have proved successful for pollination in the past, a key focus of this project will be working with the bees and ensuring their health is front of mind,” said Mr Callander.

“We will be one of the first in the world to use enclosed environments for nectar collection.”

AgriFutures Australia, General Manager Business Development, Michael Beer has welcomed the renewed collaboration with ManukaLife and is looking forward to exploring the potential of the Australian Manuka honey industry.

“We’ve had a very successful relationship with ManukaLife in the past, especially with the Plant breeding program that concluded in March 2020,” he said.

“This renewed partnership offers the opportunity to further develop and explore this high potential new and emerging industry. This investment clearly aligns to the AgriFutures Emerging Industries Program goal to support new and emerging industries and I’m excited to see what the results will deliver for the Australian Manuka honey industry.”

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