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PRESS RELEASE

EUROPEAN MARKET OPENS UP FOR CAMEROON FAIR TRADE AND ORGANIC HONEY

The *European Union* has just approved Cameroon's Plan to guarantee the quality of honey exported from Cameroon to the European Union states. The *Cameroonian Union of Apiculture Exporters*, who worked in close collaboration with the *Ministry of Livestock* to jointly develop the scheme, are both very pleased. "This opens up a fantastic opportunity for Cameroonian enterprises to sell honey to European buyers" said their President Mr. Tchana. He is also Director of *Guiding Hope*, the only enterprise already authorized to export their honey to Europe up to 2011, when the scheme has to be renewed. He looks forward to the first consumers buying and tasting the unique *Miel Royal* dark honey from the savannah forests around Ngaoundal, in the near future.

Tchana adds "Over the last two years we have been working with over 1000 beekeepers to set this up in the remote Adamaoua region of Cameroon. We trace the honey from the hive, through the beekeepers, to our registered collection centres, and eventually all the way to our buyer in the UK, Tropical Forest Products. For beekeepers that are largely illiterate and have not been further than their village, this is a major feat of perseverance and commitment to making this scheme work! The Honey Monitoring Residue Plan* also entailed getting samples from the 7 villages where our honey is produced, in partnership with MINEPIA and IDRU, and investing with our own resources to send these off to a laboratory in Europe for testing, as there are unfortunately no certified laboratories yet in Cameroon. What's more important, we are selling this honey as 'organic', which means it is pure and free from pesticides".

Guiding Hope, a Common Initiative Group founded in 2007, will be selling its honey in British supermarkets and shops as **certified organic honey**. The Soil Association, which has the highest standards for organic* products and processing in the world, certified Guiding Hope's honey, wax and other bee products such as propolis in 2008 and is now in Cameroon to check and renew their certificate. Customers in Europe are willing to pay a higher price for *Miel Royal*, knowing the certificate means it is organic, pure and natural. Critically, this means that Guiding Hope, which is currently also being audited to become an Ethical Trade enterprise, can afford to pay its beekeeper suppliers up to 50% higher than the current market prices in Adamaoua. As Guiding Hope's core trading principles are to both support local communities, trade fairly*, and profitably, and look after the environment - they are overjoyed that entry into the EU market means they can now sell their honey to hungry European customers. Much needed support and beekeeper training was given by capacity building organisation *PAELLA-E* to help set up Guiding Hope's honey quality assurance scheme and by *IDRU* to collect the samples of honey according to the MINEPIA rules.

¹ Published in the Official Journal of the European Union: Commission Decision 30 October 2009, amending Decision 2004/432/EC, on the approval of residue monitoring plans submitted by third countries in accordance with Council Directive 96/23/EC (notified under document C(2009) 8347) (2009/800/EC). <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:285:0043:0048:EN:PDF>



Cameroonians - do not worry - *Miel Royal* is also available in Cameroon! Hermann Tchamba, Guiding Hope's Production Director based in Yaounde, notes that "more and more of our Cameroonian customers want assurance that our honey is pure, not adulterated and natural – we are starting an awareness campaign to let people know what organic means, to explain why there are different colours and types honeys on the market and how to tell good from bad honey". *Miel Royal* is dark brown with an intense, maple, smoky, malty flavour because of the types of forest trees from which bees collect nectar and pollen. By contrast, Guiding Hope's White Mountain honey, from the forests of Oku in the North West, is white, fragrant, fresh and citrusy, and often is creamy and crystallized. "Crystallization does not mean it is poor quality honey" says Verina Ingram, their Marketing and Environment Director, "it is a natural process that happens to most honey over time after it has been extracted from the hive." In fact, in Europe many consumers prefer spreading granulated honey on their bread and using in their cakes and coffee. Crystallization reflects low levels of glucose and cool temperatures. If you don't like it, just leave the honey in a warmer place or put the bottle under hot water for a while and it will return to a more liquid state. What, then, is poor quality honey? Simple tests are:

- Honey which 'bubbles' is fermenting. It is not dangerous and can be used in baking or for honey wine, but the slow creation of alcohol can be tasted. Fermentation happens when honey has been collected from the hive too early, before it is 'ripe', so naturally has a high water content. Honey that's been mixed with water can also start fermenting.
- Honey should not contain foreign objects (dead bees, grass etc.) but can contain honey comb. Good honey is filtered - - and it should say so on the label - but not with too fine a mesh to take out the natural goodness and pollen.
- Honey that's been over heated or left in the sun too long loses its medicinal properties – check when you buy that it's not stocked in the glaring sun and store it in a cool place.
- Honey that has been adulterated (with water, sugar or bananas), can be given simple tests:
 1. Dip your finger in, if its drips slowly, its honey; if it drops straight away its likely to be tampered with- as honey is naturally viscous.
 2. Drop some onto the ground- honey doesn't flatten straight away but forms small balls, other liquids will flatten out.
 3. Drop into water, if it sinks without mixing in the water its honey; if it mixes straightaway it's adulterated.
 4. Dip a matchstick in and strike it. If it ignites its honey, otherwise it's impure.

RELATED NEWS

On 13 November 2009 Guiding Hope's Micheal Tchana was awarded a distinction for his thesis on 'Ethical and Sustainable Trade and Development' for his Masters degree in Peace and Development Studies from the African Institute for Peace, Communication and Development at the Protestant University of Central Africa in Yaounde. His study supports Guiding Hope's business model which focuses on development and trade, rather than aid, by creating long-lasting benefits both for people and the environment. This is especially relevant to beekeeping in Cameroon; which is a widespread economic activity that benefits thousands of households and keeps the ecosystem intact. Bees provide a vital service by pollinating trees and agricultural crops, and also give us nutritious, healing honey, and other important products such as wax and propolis, used in cosmetics, medicines and pharmaceuticals. Tchana concludes that by supporting sustainable production and trade of honey and wax, the environment and thousands of households are better off.

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TECHNICAL NOTES*

WHAT IS ORGANIC? Organic farming recognizes the direct connection between human health and food. Strict regulations, known as 'standards' (European Union Council Regulation No 1804 on Organic Farming and www.soilassociation.org), define what organic farmers can and cannot do, providing procedures that can be checked to emphasize the protection of wildlife and the environment. In organic farming, pesticides are severely restricted – instead farmers are encouraged to promote nutrient-rich soil to grow strong, healthy crops and encourage wildlife to help control pests and disease. Artificial chemical fertilizers are prohibited – an alternative is to develop a healthy, fertile soil by growing and rotating a mixture of crops using plants to fix nitrogen from the atmosphere. Animal cruelty is prohibited and a free-range life for farm animals is guaranteed. Routine use of drugs, antibiotics and wormers is disallowed - instead the farmer use preventative methods, like moving animals to fresh pasture and keeping smaller herd size and the production and use of genetically modified products in animal feed is banned.

WHAT IS FAIR AND ETHICAL TRADE? These are voluntary standards to ensure that there are fair and ethical trading relationships between buyers and sellers - from the producer to the retailers, as well as socially responsible practices, and fair and ethical employment in both developing and developed countries. A guiding principle is that relationships should be characterised by mutual respect, transparency and fairness. 'Fairness is characterized by equity, respect, justice and stewardship of the shared world, both among people and in their relations to other living beings. 'Social justice and social rights are an integral part of organic agriculture and processing.'

WHAT IS HONEY? By definition, honey is a natural product. Honey is the natural sweet substance produced by bees from the nectar and pollen of blossoms or from living parts of plants. Bees collect, transform and combine these with specific substances of their own, store and leave in the honey comb to ripen and mature. Bees make honey from the nectar and pollen collected from blossomed flowers on plants and trees. Honey naturally contains sugars; glucose and fructose are the major sugars as well as proteins, carbohydrates, hormones, organic acids, and antimicrobial compounds. Honey is a good carbohydrate and a rich storehouse of essential vitamins, minerals and trace elements for the human body. Honey has medicinal properties; it is a natural energizer; applied to injury, minor abrasions and burns, honey can aid in healing; it is an effective antimicrobial agent and boosts antioxidants in the body.

WHO IS MINEPIA? The Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries & Animal Industries is the main agency in Cameroon concerned with regulating and promoting animals, their products and industries. The competent authority within MINEPIA for exports is the Direction du Développement des Productions et des Industries Animales (DDPIA)/Department of Development of Production and Animal Industries. Dr Mballa Benjamin, in the Sub-department for the Promotion of Innovations and Professional Organisations, is the Focal Point for the National Residue Monitoring Plan, acting on behalf of the Minister Dr Aboubakar Sarki. Address : Mvog Betsi, Yaoundé, PO Box MINEPIA, Cameroon, Tel 00237 74 87 31 80 Email pnsr_cameroun@yahoo.fr

WHAT AND WHY ARE THERE EUROPEAN UNION RULES? The European Union has set standards to ensure that its citizens eat food that is safe and does not have contained harmful residues of any veterinary medicines, pesticides and contaminants. Imports of many foods, including honey, are only allowed from countries that are authorized to import specific products. Additionally, the product, such as honey, must be accompanied by a health certificate stipulating that it meets the animal and public health requirements both in Europe and in Cameroon. It also has to enter the EU through an approved EU Border Inspection Post.

WHAT DO HONEY EXPORTERS NEED TO DO? Collection, storage and processing sites must be registered and inspected annually by MINEPIA authorities; and they must possess and export authorisation. Only exporters who comply with these texts will be eligible for inclusion in national sampling for the **National Honey Residue Monitoring Plan** and exports to the European Union. These are laid down in;

Decree No. 75 /527 16 July 1975 ('Portant réglementation des établissements d'exploitation en matière d'élevage et des industries animales') which requires all establishments storing and processing animal products to register with MINEPIA and involves obtaining an initial authorisation, followed by a Conformity Certificate, based on a technical inspection by local MINEPIA authorities, and renewed annually.

Law No. 2000/017 December 19th 2000 ('Portant réglementation de l'inspection sanitaire vétérinaire') concerns veterinary sanitation inspections of animals and animal products, describes inspections and states that no food item can be sold to consumers if it has not undergone a veterinary sanitation inspection.

Law No. 2000 018 December 19th 2000 ('Portant réglementation de la pharmacie vétérinaire') states that all pharmaceutical substances sold on the market must be authorised and veterinary substances must be delivered by prescription administered by a veterinarian. Anyone delivering these without a prescriptions is subject to sanctions of a fine.

Decree No. 178/CAB/PM December 5th 2008 ('Portant création; organisation et fonctionnement de la commission chargée d'examiner les dossiers de demande d'autorisation de mise sur le marché des médicaments vétérinaires') enables the above Law, setting up a Commission which authorises veterinary medicines, renewing and withdrawal of authorisation; and the restriction or banning of veterinary medicines for sale.