



# RURAL INSIGHT

NZ'S #1 RURAL REAL ESTATE BRAND

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## MANUKA HONEY OPPORTUNITIES.

Despite being a tough year for Manuka honey harvesting last spring-summer, honey processors are optimistically looking forward to spring time with the hope of a better harvest, and continuing strong returns for the liquid gold crop.

**D**emand for areas of previously low value scrub land has continued to reflect the growth in the Manuka honey sector, with rural real estate agents reporting on going interest in more remote scrub country that only a few years ago would have been classed as almost waste country.

The growth in the Manuka sector has been significant in recent years, with value surging by 45% from 2015 to 2016, and only poor harvest conditions last summer slowing that growth rate.

This year's inaugural Apiculture NZ conference was testimony to the industry's strong prospects, with over 1000 delegates attending at Rotorua.

The industry took fright earlier this year with the discovery of Myrtle Rust in a Northland nursery, and subsequent discoveries through the North Island. However at this stage there are no definitive indications native Manuka stands have been infected by the blight.

Meantime beekeepers and processors are anxiously awaiting a formal definition and testing procedure for Manuka honey from

Ministry for Primary Industries to ensure the product retains its genuine high value status on overseas supermarket shelves.

Manuka honey's contribution to New Zealand's export value has recently been highlighted by export data showing New Zealand exports more honey by value than any other country, amounting to US\$34 million for June alone. Yet the volume exported is only a tenth of China's, with that market accounting for a third of sales, alongside the United Kingdom.

Mark Monckton, Bayleys rural real estate agent for Taranaki said the surge of interest in Manuka had bought the focus firmly back on opportunities within some of his region's more remote farming businesses.

“The surge of interest in Manuka has bought the focus firmly back on opportunities for farming businesses located in more remote areas.”

“The districts around Taranaki and Wanganui, areas like the Waitotara Valley and Inland Stratford have experienced a real surge in interest in properties. We are seeing some large players in the industry including Settlers Honey, Comvita, and Tweeddale now holding a lot of country there.”

He said the interest was now reflected in the premiums desirable Manuka friendly properties were fetching, with land prices more than doubling for some properties.

“Those properties that may have typically been worth about \$1,500 a hectare are now exceeding \$4,000 a hectare, and that is a lift experienced only in the last couple of years, it has come quickly. Premium Manuka properties are now more difficult to source with subdivision of larger properties becoming an option.”

Per hive and payment based on hive yields are evolving between land owners and beekeepers, with more land owners even considering planting Manuka stands specifically for honey production.

Greater awareness among farmers about the need for riparian strips to protect waterways is also creating another ecological and business bonus for them, with Manuka plantings helping preserve those waterways, bring more bees to the area and increase honey volumes in districts.

Farmers are also being encouraged to work with programmes like the Trees for Bees initiative, supported by Federated Farmers,

where a variety of plantings were recommended including other natives and flaxes alongside Manuka, to reduce the risk of a mono-cultural, disease prone environment.

Te Awamutu based Manuka Health founded in 2006 has built a global brand for its quality Manuka honey and products, and has been working on fostering strong and productive land partnerships as part of their growth strategy.

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The company is seeking out Manuka landowners to partner with throughout the North Island area, providing healthy hives for placement on land that has a good proportion of Manuka plants upon it.

“We are keen to establish long term relationships that deliver a win:win for the landowner and for ourselves in what is proving to be a growing, high value market,” says apiculture general manager Dave Campbell.



Photo credit: Manuka Health New Zealand