

South-East Honey Survey 2008

I would like to thank all the beekeepers that have taken the trouble to respond to my request for honey crop and price statistics. This year I have had the most responses ever (125) and that makes some of the averages more realistic. As usual, a number of the replies do not give sale prices for the honey, so these are correspondingly less representative. Obviously the results only give averages from those beekeepers who were good enough to respond, as with the fishermen who boast about the size of the catch, we are happy to disclose when we have a good crop, not so keen when the crop is small or non-existent! However, on balance, it seems to have been a better year than 2007 for honey.

In the discussion below, I have made comparison with the final results from the previous survey asking the same questions about the 2007 season, so that you can compare this directly to last year's survey.

Results 2008

- **Average Honey Yield**
125 replies ranging from 0.0lbs to 206.7lbs per colony
2008 average = 45lbs (2007 = 39lb)
- **Direct Sales Price (Flower):**
69 replies ranging from £2.00/lb to £6.00/lb
2008 average = £3.57/lb (2007 = £3.34/lb)
- **Wholesale Honey Price (Flower):**
18 replies ranging from £2.00/lb to £3.20/lb
2008 average = £2.67/lb (2007 = £3.13/lb)
- **Bulk Honey Price (Flower):**
2 replies ranging from £1.60/lb to £3.00/lb
2008 average = £2.30/lb (2007 = £4.42/lb)
- **Cut comb:**
11 replies were received ranging from £4.50/lb to £8.00/lb.
2008 average = £6.95/lb (2007 = £6.36/lb)

Discussion

These results are compiled from beekeepers owning between 1 and 38 colonies with total yields between 0lbs and 2240lbs. There is a wide variation in reported average honey yields – from 0 to 206 lbs per colony. The average yield (45 lb) is an increase over the previous year's figure (39lb), which was mainly due to the poor weather in

the summer (2007) season. This year was substantially better, in weather and in price, partially recovering towards the averages of 2006 and 2005 (51 and 53lbs respectively). Again I received some surveys indicating that no honey had been collected (9 responses)

Direct sale to customers is the commonest method of honey sales - 69 respondents provided a figure for this. As usual there is little agreement over price. The average price this year has recovered from last years low to equal that of 2006 (£3.54). I still feel that beekeepers are not charging the price that they could easily achieve for selling locally produced honey, something that some sectors of the buying public clearly want. Using figures from this survey, an average crop of honey per colony was worth £160.65 when sold direct at average prices. (2007 = £130.26)

18 replies indicated selling honey wholesale to a retailer. At the average wholesale price, an average crop of honey per colony was worth £120.15 (2007 = £122.07)

2 contributors sold honey in bulk. At the average bulk price, an average crop of honey per colony was worth £103.50 (2007 = £172.38).

Approximately 9% of replies indicated selling cut-comb honey and it is assumed that the majority of cut-comb is sold direct. The price of cut-comb honey is roughly 1.90 times that of extracted honey sold direct. At average cut comb price, an average crop of honey per colony was worth £312.75 (2007 = £248.04)

Overall, direct sales honey prices in 2008 have recovered by approx 6.88% over 2007 prices to equal 2006 levels. Both the wholesale and bulk honey prices have kept reasonable although it is clear that many beekeepers do not sell through retail outlets or to honey packers.

This year I have obtained figures for other regions and they make an interesting comparison:

Region	Flower Wholesale	Flower Direct Sales	Flower Bulk Sales	Cut comb	Maincrop yield (lb)
	£/lb	£/lb	£/lb	£/lb	
Western	£2.95	£4.09	£3.07	£5.88	22
Wales	£3.28	£3.98	£2.18	£6.58	15
Northern	£2.82	£3.94	£2.26	£6.54	26
South East	£2.67	£3.57	£2.30	£6.95	45
South	£3.41	£3.82	£1.82	£6.82	33
Eastern	£2.68	£3.75	£2.30	£5.46	22
South West	£3.18	£3.82	£1.82	£7.27	22
North East	£3.09	£3.73	£2.00	£6.36	22
Average	£3.01	£3.84	£2.22	£6.48	25.87

These regions are the administrative regions of the National Bee Unit and can be found on the NBU website:

<http://beebase.csl.gov.uk>, click on Bee Health Inspectorate in the menu.

Looking at these figures it can be seen that whilst the SE has the highest average yield per colony, the crop is sold for the lowest average price, both direct to the public and wholesale! The SE cut comb and bulk honey prices are competitive against the other regions but, it is evident from the SE survey that, these only form a small percentage of all SE honey sales.

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