

EU seeks to clarify honey

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Honey bees are seen in France in 2008. Honey is the purest of foods which under European Commission proposals Friday should remain so once rules about pollen from genetically modified plants found in it are straightened out.

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The Commission said that "in line with international ([World Trade Organization](#)) standards, the proposal defines pollen as a natural constituent of honey and not as an ingredient."

Such an apparently simple formulation should, if accepted by all 27 EU member states, clarify the position for beekeepers left in limbo by a European Court of Justice ruling earlier this month.

The court said it considered pollen to be an ingredient in honey, rather than brought there naturally by the bees, and if it came from GM plants, then the honey would have to carry a warning that it contained GM products.

The warning would be needed if GM pollen accounted for 0.9 percent of all the pollen in the honey, thereby undercutting the 'purity' branding that producers prize above all.

In contrast, the Commission judged that pollen gets into the honey "as a result of the activity of the bees and is found in honey regardless of whether the [beekeeper](#) intervenes.

"Consequently, since pollen is considered as a natural constituent of honey, EU labelling rules requiring a list of ingredients would not apply."

The Greenpeace [environmental group](#) in a [tweet](#) attacked the proposal, saying it was meant to sweep the issue under the carpet.

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