

# AGRITECH GRANT HELPS GROW THE BUZZ ABOUT LOCAL HONEY

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) is pleased to announce it has awarded Funky Produce Limited (Funky Produce) a SMART AgriTech grant to automate their business so they can supply more local honey, at an accessible price.

Funky Produce started supplying locally harvested honey to shops around the island in November 2019 under the brand name 'Rarotonga Honey'. Since then, their business has grown to have 160 operational hives and 340 more hives ready for this coming honey season. With more hives, and automated bottling and labelling funded through the SMART Agritech scheme, Funky Produce is all set to start replacing imported honey on local supermarket shelves.

Funky Produce owner and beekeeper Matai Price has developed his honey business from scratch, starting by breeding honeybees and establishing the hives. Funky Produce has been so successful, they have been struggling to meet demand for their product.

The Agritech grant will move Funky Produce forward from a manual operation to a partially automated operation, enabling them to process more honey for sale. Automation will also improve quality control and significantly reduce production costs. "My target of 500 operational hives by the

end of 2021 will put Funky Produce in a good position to slow down the import of New Zealand honey," says Matai. "I have strong support from our local retailers. The major stores around the island stock my honey and discussions with store owners have been positive towards replacing their NZ supply with ours. This is great start to providing our people with a high-quality local honey that's more affordable than the imported product."

Financial Secretary, Garth Henderson stated that 'Funky Produce's proposal is an excellent example of the Agritech scheme's qualifying activity, targeting import substitution. Not only will this reduce the outflow of capital from our economy, the shortened distribution chain also means cheaper honey for our local consumers'.

In addition to providing a healthy food, the local honey industry has a positive impact on the food chain by increasing the number of bees on the island for pollinating our crops and fruit trees. It also produces beeswax, a useful byproduct that Funky Produce is storing with an eye to a future

secondary industry. Beeswax is used for making many products, from candles and furniture polish to cosmetics.



AgriTech Grant applications close at 4pm on Friday 29th January. MFEM staff are available to give applicants advice and feedback to ensure their application is in line with the SMART AgriTech Policy before it is submitted.

