

28. Bee Products

1. Definition of Category

Honeybees, specifically, natural honey, royal jelly, and propolis.

HS Numbers	Commodity
0409.00	Natural honey
3001.90	Royal jelly
0511.99	Propolis (solid and raw masses)
2106.90	Propolis (ethanol extracted)

Note: The HS codes, except for 0409.00, include products other than those reported in this guidebook as well. So, this guidebook deals with the statistics of natural honey.

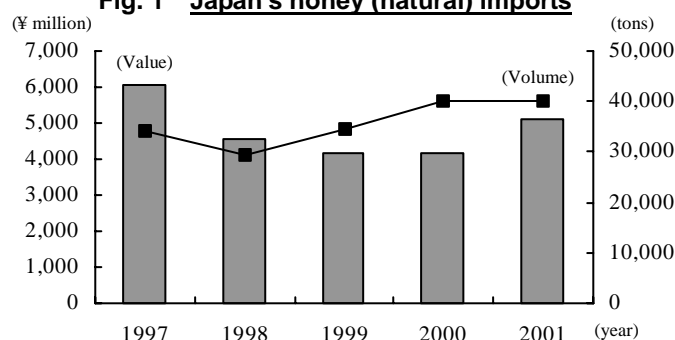
2. Import Trends

(1) Recent Trends in Bee Product Imports

Demand for honey reached a peak in 1990 due to a boom for honey lemon soft drinks, with total imports of natural honey reaching 69,435 tons. After the honey lemon boom, which lasted only one year, imports began falling. In recent years, imports have run at about 30,000-40,000 tons range a year. Almost imported honey came from China. The result of higher-priced honey produced in China was a sharp decline in import volume. Retail prices have fallen so sharply that many importers find it difficult to raise prices enough to offset the increased prices of honey imported from China.

In 2001, the average import unit price rose by 21% due to higher raw material prices and the weakness of the yen. But despite the price increases, import volume still rose slightly from the year before, to 40,188 tons.

Fig. 1 Japan's honey (natural) imports



	1997		1998		1999		2000		2001	
	Volume	Value	Volume	Value	Volume	Value	Volume	Value	Volume	Value
Natural honey	34,318	6,061	29,425	4,529	34,658	4,147	40,077	4,170	40,188	5,088

Units tons, ¥ million Source: Japan Exports and Imports
(Note) This is not total reported in this guidebook.

There are no customs clearance statistics on imports of royal jelly since there is no independent HS code for that product. Therefore, trends in imports are not clear. Industry association, however, reports that imports have been growing from 398 tons in 1996 to 587 tons in 2001 (see Fig. 3). There are no customs clearance statistics on propolis either due to the lack of an independent HS code, so the trends in imports are unclear.

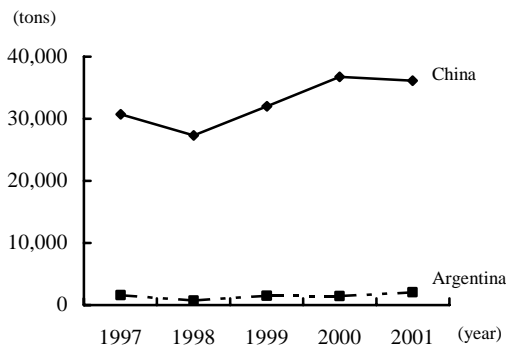
(2) Imports by Place of Origin

1) Natural Honey

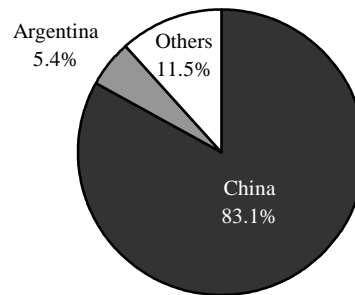
China supplies an overwhelming proportion of Japan's imports of natural honey – 83.1% on a value basis and 90.0% on a volume basis in 2001. Other exporters of natural honey to Japan include Argentina, Vietnam, Canada, and the United States.

Fig. 2 Principal exporters of honey (natural) to Japan

Trends in import volume by leading exporters



Shares of honey (natural) imports in 2001 (value basis)



	1997	1998	1999	2000		2001			
	Volume	Volume	Volume	Volume	Value	Volume	Value	Volume	Value
China	30,708	27,295	32,012	36,754	3,517	36,157	90.0%	4,229	83.1%
Argentina	1,589	700	1,513	1,466	180	2,085	5.2%	273	5.4%
Canada	299	283	247	357	58	462	1.1%	89	1.7%
U.S.A.	371	260	304	304	83	278	0.7%	94	1.9%
Hungary	202	244	100	303	75	222	0.6%	54	1.1%
Others	1,149	643	481	893	258	984	2.4%	350	6.9%
TOTAL	34,318	29,425	34,658	40,077	4,170	40,188	100.0%	5,088	100.0%
(E U)	116	118	52	75	46	93	0.2%	79	1.5%

Units: 1,000 tons, ¥ million

Source: Japan Exports and Imports

2) Royal Jelly

According to the data from industry association (National Honey Fair Trade Conference), China supplies 93.7% of Japan's imports of royal jelly. The remainder is being imported from Taiwan, etc.

Fig. 3 Leading exporters of royal jelly to Japan

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	
	Volume	Volume	Volume	Volume	Volume	Share (%)
China	403	428	466	496	550	93.7%
Taiwan	47	45	46	30	30	5.1%
Other	9	3	8	8	7	1.2%
TOTAL	459	476	520	534	587	100.0%

Unit: tons

Source: National Honey Fair Trade Conference

3) Propolis

Brazil is believed to be the largest supplier of the propolis being imported to Japan. Other exporters to Japan include Australia, New Zealand, and China. The volume of imports of propolis, however, cannot be determined, so the precise breakdown of imports by supplier is unclear.

(3) Imports' Market Share in Japan

1) Natural Honey

Japan consumes about 40,000 tons of honey a year. Imports therefore constitute over 90 percent of the market. There is little prospect for any increase in domestic production due to the conversion of the agricultural land from which bees make their honey to residential districts, the decline in the absolute number of domestic beekeepers and the aging of the remainder, the lack of younger people willing to take over existing operations, etc. The share of imports is expected to continue rising even further in the future.

2) Royal Jelly

The decline in the number of domestic beekeepers has led to a drop in the production of royal jelly in Japan. Since domestic production of royal jelly declined to about just 4 tons, almost all of the royal jelly sold in Japan are imported.

Fig. 4 Imports' share in the Japanese market

		1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Royal Jelly	Domestic Product	5,802	5,464	4,739	4,035	*4,000
	Import	458,615	475,806	519,757	533,658	587,045
	TOTAL	464,417	481,350	524,496	537,693	591,045
	Imports' Share	98.8%	98.8%	99.1%	99.2%	99.3%

Unit: kg

Source: National Royal Jelly Fair Trade Conference

Figures for 2001 are estimates.

3) Propolis

There is no information available on the amount of production or import of propolis, so the share of imports is unknown as well. Almost all propolis, however, is believed to be imported.

3. Key Considerations related to Importing

(1) Regulations and Procedural Requirements at the Time of Importation

The laws governing imports of bee products differ depending on the form, the claimed effectiveness, etc. When bee products are imported as a foodstuff, they are subject to the regulations of the Food Sanitation Law, while when they are imported as a pharmaceutical, they are subject to the regulations of the Pharmaceutical Affairs Law. At the present time, bee products are mostly imported as food. They are not believed to be imported much as a pharmaceutical.

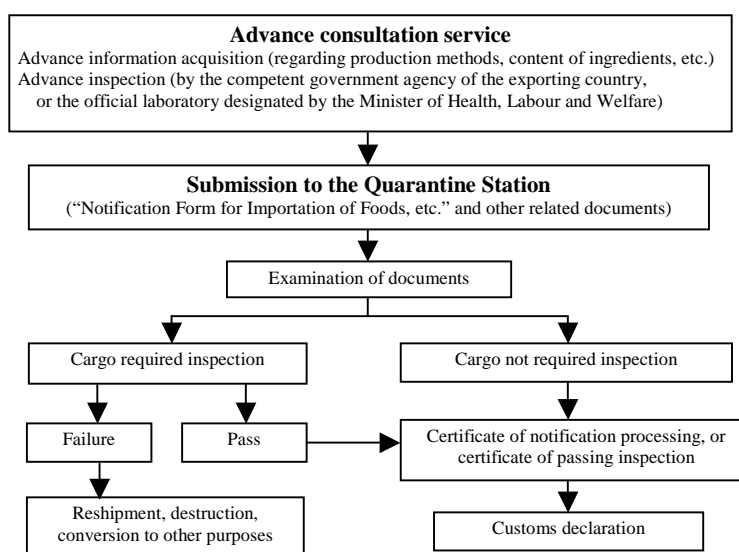
When honey is imported packed in its natural comb state or as harvested, larvae and honeybees are sometimes included. In this case, inspection under the animal quarantine system is required under provisions of the Domestic Animal Infectious Diseases Control Law.

<Imports as a foodstuff>

1) Food Sanitation Law

When bee products are imported as food, the procedures under the Food Sanitation Law must be cleared. Under provisions of the Food Sanitation Law, an import notification is required for bee products being imported for the purpose of sale or for other commercial purposes. Importers are required to submit the completed "Notification Form for Importation of Foods, etc." to the Quarantine Station at the port of entry. A determination is made based on the document examination whether or not an inspection at the bonded area is required.

Note that some countries use tetracycline family antibiotics for preventing contagious diseases among honeybees. Japan does not allow residual antibiotics in any food products -including honey or in royal jelly or propolis - and watches for this closely at the time of import. It does not allow imports of any products in which even small amounts of residual antibiotics are found as a result of inspection.

Fig. 5 Procedures required under the Food Sanitation Law

Prior to importing, the importer may take a sample of forthcoming imports to official laboratories designated by the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare in Japan or in exporting countries. Those test results may be substituted for the corresponding inspection at the port of entry, which expedites the quarantine clearance process. In addition, importers who wish to submit their notifications by computer may make use of the computerized FAINS (Food Automated Import Inspection and Notification System) for processing import-related documentation. Importers who have the required hardware and software may apply for a security code from the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare to access the system.

<Import as a pharmaceutical>

1) Pharmaceutical Affairs Law

When bee products are imported as a pharmaceutical or ingredients for a pharmaceutical, they are required by the Pharmaceutical Affairs Law to be examined for safety and to obtain license for import or sale in business. Note that honey covered by the Japan Pharmacopoeia is designated as pharmaceutical not requiring approval and therefore only customs clearance is required.

Further, honey or royal jelly imported as an ingredient for later domestic processing into a cosmetic is not subject to the regulations of the Pharmaceutical Affairs Law at the time of import. For more details, contact the pharmaceutical affairs division in the nearest prefectural government office.

(2) Regulations and Procedural Requirements at the Time of Sale

The sale of bee products as a foodstuff is subject to the regulations of the Food Sanitation Law, the JAS Law, and the Measurement Law. The sale as a pharmaceutical is subject to the regulations of the Pharmaceutical Affairs Law. Some variety of bee products is subject to provision of the Act Against Unjustifiable Premiums and Misleading Representations. Used containers of bee products, regardless of usage, are subject to provision of the Containers and Packaging Recycling Law and the Law for Promotion of Effective Utilization of Resources.

<Sale as a foodstuff>

1) Food Sanitation Law

The Food Sanitation Law prohibits the sale of foods containing toxic or harmful substances and foods that are unsafe for human health. When selling bee products as a foodstuff, it must be labeled in accordance with provisions of the Food Sanitation Law. (see 4. Labeling)

2) JAS Law

(Law Concerning Standardization and Proper Labeling of Agricultural and Forestry Products)

The JAS Law establishes quality labeling standard for all food and beverage products sold to ordinary consumers. (see 4. Labeling)

3) Measurement Law

Bee products sealed in wrapping or containers are required the labeling of the net content to certain accuracy (range of error specified by Cabinet Ordinance).

4) Act Against Unjustifiable Premiums and Misleading Representations

The industry has voluntarily adopted labeling guideline for honey and royal jelly in order to assure consumer product choice availability and preserve fair competition, based on the Act Against Unjustifiable Premiums and Misleading Representations. (see 4. Labeling)

5) Containers and Packaging Recycling Law (Law for Promotion of Sorted Collection and Recycling of Containers and Packaging)

The Containers and Packaging Recycling Law was enacted to promote recycling of container and packaging waste materials. It provides for sorting by consumers, sorted collection by municipalities, and product reuse (recycling) by product makers and distributors for glass bottles, PET bottles, paper and plastic containers and packaging. Consequently, bee product importers incur the obligation for recycling of containers and packaging (although stipulated small-scale importers are exempt). Please consult the competent government agencies listed below for more information.

6) Law for Promotion of Effective Utilization of Resources

As of April of 2001, new identifier labeling requirements apply to paper (not including beverage containers not containing aluminum) and plastic container materials, in addition to previously existing labeling requirements for steel and aluminum cans. (see 4. Labeling)

<Sale as a pharmaceutical>**1) Pharmaceutical Affairs Law**

The Pharmaceutical Affairs Law requires prior approval be obtained for bee products sold as pharmaceuticals in business. This law states that any business that sells pharmaceuticals directly to ordinary consumers, hospitals, clinics, etc. must be licensed to sell such products. However, a business license is not required when selling to pharmaceutical manufacturers, pharmaceutical sales firms, or pharmacy owners. Applications are to be submitted to the governor of the prefecture in which the business is located, together with documents demonstrating compliance with physical criteria for each store and with personal criteria for the applicant. For more information, please consult the pharmaceutical affairs office in the concerned prefecture.

(3) Competent Agencies

- Food Sanitation Law
Policy Planning Division, Department of Food Sanitation, Pharmaceutical and Medical Safety Bureau,
Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare
TEL: 03-5253-1111 <http://www.mhlw.go.jp>
- JAS Law
Standards and Labeling Division, General Food Policy Bureau, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
TEL: 03-3502-8111 <http://www.maff.go.jp>
- Measurement Law
Measurement and Intellectual Infrastructure Division, Industrial Science and Technology Policy and Environment
Bureau, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry
TEL: 03-3501-1511 <http://www.meti.go.jp>
- Nutrition Improvement Law
Department of Food Sanitation, Pharmaceutical and Medical Safety Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare
TEL: 03-5253-1111 <http://www.mhlw.go.jp>
- Pharmaceutical Affairs Law
General Affairs Division, Pharmaceutical and Medical Safety Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare
Evaluation and Licensing Division, Pharmaceutical and Medical Safety Bureau,
Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare
TEL: 03-5253-1111 <http://www.mhlw.go.jp>
- Act Against Unjustifiable Premiums and Misleading Representations (Fair Competition Code)
Consumer Related Trade Division, Trade Practices Department, Fair Trade Commission of Japan
TEL: 03-3581-5471 <http://www.jftc.go.jp>
- Containers and Packaging Recycling Law / Law for Promotion of Effective Utilization of Resources
Recycling Promotion Division, Industrial Science and Technology Policy and Environment Bureau, Ministry of
Economy, Trade and Industry
TEL: 03-3501-1511 <http://www.meti.go.jp>
Recycling Promotion Division, Waste Management and Recycling Department, Ministry of the Environment
TEL: 03-3581-3351 <http://www.env.go.jp>
Food Industry Policy Division, General Food Policy Bureau, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
TEL: 03-3502-8111 <http://www.maff.go.jp>

4. Labeling**(1) Legally Required Labeling****<When sold as food>**

When selling bee products sealed in wrapping or containers, following items must be listed all together on the label under provisions of the Food Sanitation Law, the JAS Law (Processed Food Quality Labeling Standards), and the Measurement Law.

<Labeling items to be listed all together>

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1) Product name | 2) List of ingredients |
| 3) Net content | 4) List of food additives (if used) |
| 5) Date of minimum durability or best-before date | |
| 6) Preservation method | 7) Country of origin |
| 8) Importer's name and address | |

Example labeling for honey

Product name	Honey
List of ingredients	Chinese acacia honey
Net contents	1,000g
Date of minimum durability:	2001. 1. 22
Importer:	XYZ Corp., Ltd. X-X, YY-machi, ZZ Prefecture
Country of origin:	China

Example labeling for royal jelly

Product name	Royal Jelly
Net contents	100 capsules (each capsule containing equivalent of 0.1mg of royal Jelly)
Ingredients:	Royal jelly powder, honeybee pollen
Additives:	Soybean oil, beeswax
Preservation method	Store in cold, dark location
Date of minimum durability:	2001. 1. 22
Vendor:	ABC Corp., Ltd. A-A, BB-machi, CC Prefecture
Importer:	XYZ Corp., Ltd. X-X, YY-machi, ZZ Prefecture
Country of origin:	China

Example labeling for propolis

Product name	Propolis
Net contents	50mg
List of ingredients	Propolis_
Preservation method	Keep away from direct sunlight.
Date of minimum durability:	2001. 1. 22
Ethanol Content	Approximately 10%
Importer:	XYZ Corp., Ltd. X-X, YY-machi, ZZ Prefecture
Country of origin:	China

<Labeling of Food Products Containing Allergens>

The Food Sanitation Law mandates or recommends raw material labeling for 24 food products that contain allergens. Processed food products containing the foods listed in the following table, and processed foods containing additives derived from these foods are either required or advised to bear labeling to the effect that they contain allergenic foods. This provision was adopted as of April 2001, and from April 1, 2002 onward, it will apply to all manufactured, processed and imported processed food products and food additives.

Labeling mandatory (5 products)	Wheat, buckwheat, eggs, milk, peanuts
Labeling recommended (19 products)	Abalone, squid, salmon roe, shrimp, crabs, salmon, mackerel, oranges, kiwi fruit, peaches, white potatoes, apples, walnuts, soybeans, gelatin, beef, pork, chicken, <i>matsutake</i> mushroom

<Sale as pharmaceuticals or cosmetics>

When bee products sold as pharmaceuticals, products must display certain information as specified in the Pharmaceutical Affairs Law. This information includes the name and address of the manufacturer or importer, the name of the product, the manufacturing number or symbol, product weight, net contents, the number of pills, etc. contained in the package, and so on. From a standpoint of health and hygiene, the display of false or potentially misleading information on the container or in the attached instructions is prohibited.

<Labeling under the Law for Promotion of Effective Utilization of Resources>

When paper or plastic is used as a packaging material for wrapping of individual product items, or for labels, external packaging or elsewhere, a material identifier mark must be displayed with information where the material is used.

< Example >



(2) Voluntary Labeling Based on Provisions of Law

1) Labeling under the Nutrition Improvement Law

When employing labeling for nutritional ingredients or calories in Japanese, either on the packaging or in accompanying documentation, labeling must be in accordance with the requirements under the Nutrition Improvement Law.

<Example> Labeling must contain the quantities of calories, proteins, fats, carbohydrates, sodium,, and other nutritional ingredients present, in descending order by content volume.

(3) Voluntary Industry Labeling

There are fair trade rules established under the Act Against Unjustifiable Premiums and Misleading Representations for sale of honey and royal jelly, which set certain labeling rules.

<Honey>

The National Honey Fair Trade Conference has established the Fair Competition Code Concerning Representation of Honey, which set information to be labeled and standards for labeling, and prohibits mislabeling. Products that are deemed to be labeled in accordance with these rules are allowed to be sold with the fair trade mark of the conference on their containers or wrapping.

Honey fair trade mark



Contact:

- National Honey Fair Trade Conference TEL: 03-3279-0893

<Royal Jelly>

The National Royal Jelly Fair Trade Conference has established similar Fair Competition Code regarding the labeling of royal jelly, which set information to be labeled and standards for labeling, and prohibits mislabeling. Products that are deemed to be labeled in accordance with these rules are allowed to be sold with the certificate of the conference on their containers or wrapping.

Royal jelly certificate



Contact:

- National Royal Jelly Fair Trade Conference TEL:03-3561-5556 <http://www.rjkoutori.or.jp>

<Other voluntary standards>

The Japan Health Food & Nutrition Food Association and the Japan Propolis Conference have set their own standards for manufacturing processes and ingredients and their own labeling requirements for propolis. These organizations allow the following marks or certificates of approval to be attached to the containers or wrapping of products which are deemed to meet their standards.

JHFA Mark



Propolis



Contacts:

- Japan Health Food & Nutrition Food Association
TEL: 03-3268-3131 <http://www.health-station.com/jhnfa>
- National Honey Fair Trade Conference
TEL: 03-3384-8964 <http://www.propolis.or.jp>

Note that some honey is sold with voluntary warnings not to feed it to children less than one year of age due to the fact that honey sometimes causes infantile botulism.

5. Taxes

(1) Customs Duties

Customs duties on bee products are as follows. Other bee products are duty free.

Fig. 6 Customs duties on bee products

HS No.	Description	Rate of Duty (%)			
		General	WTO	Preferential	Temporary
0409.00	Natural honey	30%	25.5%		
2106.90-299	Food preparations excluding protein concentrates and textured protein substances (Propolis, refined by ethanol)	25%	15%	10% *Free	

Note 1: “*Free” in Preferential Rate is applicable only for Least Less Developed Countries.

Note 2: Refer to “Customs Tariff Schedules of Japan” (published by Japan Tariff Association) etc. for interpretation of tariff table.

(2) Consumption Tax

(CIF + Customs duty) x 5%

6. Product Characteristics

1) Natural Honey

Natural honey means honey free from added sugar or other substances. Honey differs in flavor, color, etc. according to the flowers from which the honey was made. There are reportedly as many as 300 species of flowers used for producing honey. The preferred species differ by country. The Japanese prefer relatively light color mild flavor honey such as Chinese milk vetch, false acacia, Japanese horse chestnut, and clover honey, while the Germans and Russians consider honey with strong fragrance to be the best quality. The French on the other hand prefer the brown colored buckwheat honey. In general, black colored honey tends to be strong both in smell and flavor, but the black color is due to the mineral content and therefore supposedly means the honey is that much more nutritious.

In view of the recent health and nature boom in Japan, interest in honey is rising in Japan as well. Honey is being increasingly used for industrial applications such as confectionery, bread, beverages, and other processed foods, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetics. Further, in recent years, comb honey, that is, honey packed in the natural comb state, has been gradually finding acceptance among the consumers and has been growing in sales. Comb honey from New Zealand and Canada is particularly famous. Chinese honey, which constitutes the majority of the honey being imported, is almost all imported in the raw form and is filtered and refined in Japan to make the final product.

2) Royal Jelly

Royal jelly, the food for queen bees, is the whitish sticky fluid secreted from the pharyngeal glands of young worker bees. It has a distinctive aroma and a tangy acidic taste and is also known in Japan as the “milk of kings”. Royal jelly is sold in three types: raw, dried, and prepared. There are standards for the properties and composition for each of these. Royal jelly is said to contain protein, minerals, vitamins, panthothenic acid, etc. and is being marketed as a nutritional enriched or other pharmaceutical and as an enriched food. Recently, various products have been developed containing royal jelly such as beverages, honey, and cosmetics.

3) Propolis

Propolis is the reddish sticky substance produced by honeybees by mixing their salivary secretions with the resin collected from the bark and young buds of the eucalyptus, pine, oak, beech, poplar, and other trees. They use it to fill crevices in their hives and strengthen the cells and to sterilize and decontaminate the hive. Propolis has created a stir in Japan as well due to this antibacterial action. Propolis is harvested from the hives of honeybees. The harder it is dried, the better the quality is considered. The propolis produced from the state of Minas Gerais of Brazil is particularly highly regarded. It is also being imported from Australia, New Zealand, and China. Most of the propolis sold in Japan is imported in the raw mass form and then refined by extraction to make the final powder, liquid, or capsule product that is shipped to the market.

7. Domestic Distribution System and Business Practices

(1) Domestic Market Conditions

1) Natural Honey

Consumption of honey may be divided into consumption in the home (so-called table honey) and industrial consumption. The current ratio is about 6 to 4. Demand for table honey is believed to be generally stable, but at one time is estimated by the industry to have dipped to 40 percent of total demand. The per capita consumption of honey in Japan is said to be about 300 grams. This is much smaller than 800 to 100 grams of the US. and 1500 to 2000 grams of Germany.

The industry, however, believes that demand for industrial use honey can be expected to grow in the future due to the greater number of applications for which it is being used in the recent health boom.

2) Royal Jelly

Royal jelly has been used for a long time now for its nutritional qualities. Recently, however, cosmetics, beverages, and a variety of other products including royal jelly have been developed as well. The market has reportedly grown in size along with this. The National Royal Jelly Fair Trade Conference currently counts 337 member firms.

3) Propolis

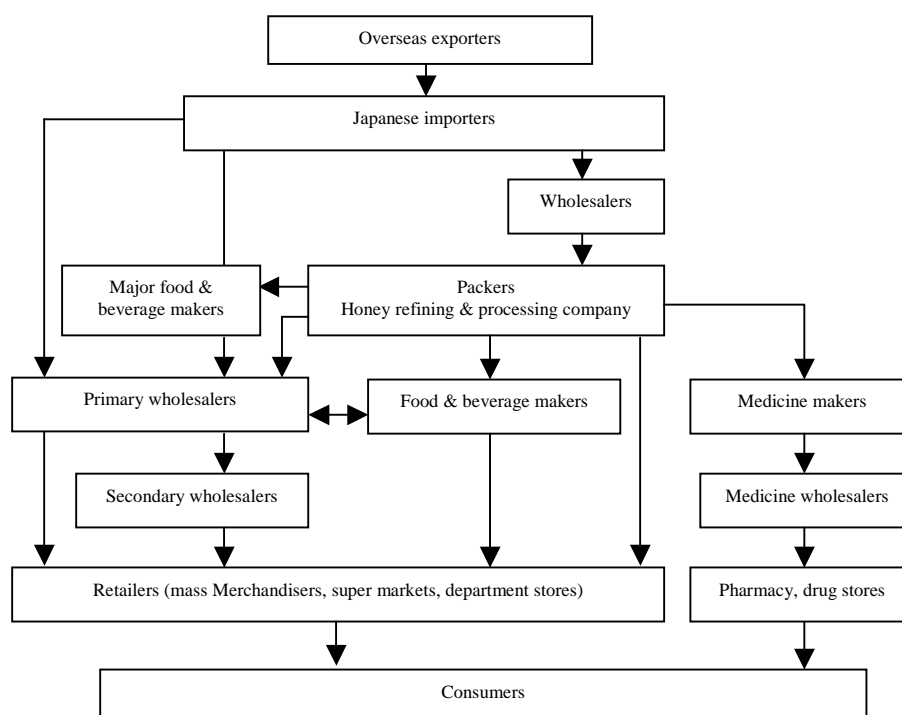
Reflecting the recent health boom, the market appears to be growing. The Japan Propolis Fair Trade Conference currently counts about 250 member firms. Propolis is sometimes used in the western countries as a folk cure, but has not been recognized yet as a medicine in Japan.

(2) Distribution Channels

1) Natural Honey

In Japan, the majority of the honey is first imported in drums and other large containers both for household use and industrial use, and then repacked domestically by local packers (honey refiners/processors). Honey for household consumption is mainly sold at retailers, supermarkets, and department stores. Honey is not a high turnover product, so while also sold at convenience stores etc., the volume of sales appears to be small. Small brands of honey, much of which may be found at health food stores etc., account for about 30 percent of the market.

Fig. 7 Distribution channel for natural honey



2) Royal Jelly

Royal jelly is mainly imported by trading companies in the raw form, though some is freeze-dried as well. The imported royal jelly is then prepared or processed into the final product by domestic manufacturers. Some manufacturers and processors have created their own sales companies and are engaged in mail order sales or door to door sales.

3) Propolis

Propolis is mainly imported by trading companies in the form of raw masses. Some domestic vendors import in the form of direct products, but these appears to be small in number. The raw masses of imported propolis are refined by extraction by domestic manufacturers and processors to make final products, which are sold through agent's etc. Industry sources believe that very little is being sold by mail order.

