

**APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION  
~~OF THE DESIGNATION OF ORIGIN~~/ GEOGRAPHICAL  
INDICATION <sup>1)</sup>  
FOR AN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCT OR FOODSTUFF**

**I. Applicant**

**1. Name:**

Kurpiowsko-Mazowiecki Związek Pszczelarzy w Ostrołęce (beekeepers' association in Ostrołęka)

**2. Seat or residence and address:**

ul. Broniewskiego 20  
07-415 Olszewo-Borki

**3. Mailing address:**

tel. +48 29 745 15 13  
e-mail: zszymanski26@wp.pl

**4. Person acting on behalf of the applicant:**

Zbigniew Szymański

**5. Group:**

Kurpiowsko-Mazowiecki Związek Pszczelarzy w Ostrołęce (beekeepers' association in Ostrołęka) has 180 members.

**II. Specification**

**1. Name:**

Miód kurpiowski

**2. Application for registration of:**

- 1) designation of origin  
2) geographical indication

X

**3. Category:**

Class 1.4. – Other products of animal origin, honey

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<sup>1)</sup> Delete as appropriate.

## 4. Description:

### Microscopic characteristics

‘Miód kurpiowski’ is a nectar honey, with the possible inclusion of honeydew. It is a polyfloral honey; pollen from any one plant species must not account for more than 30% of the total, and pollen from crop plants may not exceed 10% of the total.

### Organoleptic characteristics

‘Miód kurpiowski’ is a liquid or crystallised nectar honey, with the possible inclusion of honeydew. Its consistency is thick, liquid and viscous. It forms medium- and fine-grained crystals, and its colour ranges from pale yellow, through straw-coloured to brown with greenish highlights. The greenish highlights indicate the proportion of honeydew in the honey. The honey has an intense aroma, with a distinctive spicy fragrance and a delicate, slightly sweet taste.

### Physico-chemical characteristics

Physico-chemical characteristics of ‘miód kurpiowski’:

- monosaccharide (glucose and fructose) content – not less than 60 g/100 g,
- sucrose content – not more than 5 g/100 g,
- diastase activity on the Schade scale – not less than 8,
- free acids – not more than 50 meq/kg,
- electrical conductivity – not more than 0.8 mS/cm,
- water-insoluble content – not more than 0.1 g/100 g
- water content – not more than 18.5%
- HMF (5-hydroxymethylfurfural) content – not more than 10 mg/kg.

‘Miód kurpiowski’ is produced exclusively by bees of the following races: the European dark bee (*Apis mellifera mellifera*), the Carniolan honeybee (*Apis mellifera carnica*) and the Caucasian honeybee (*Apis mellifera caucasica*) and bees resulting from the interbreeding of these races.

## 5. Geographical area:

‘Miód kurpiowski’ is harvested in the area known in a historical and ethnographical context as Kurpie.

This comprises the following area of Mazowieckie Voivodeship:

Municipalities: Chorzele, Jednoróżec and Przasnysz in Przasnysz Powiat,

Municipalities: Krasnosielc, Płoniawy-Bramura, Sypniewo, Młynarze, Różan, Rzewnie and Maków in Maków Powiat

Municipalities: Obryte and Zatory in Pułtusk Powiat

Municipalities: Długosiodło, Brańszczyk and Rząśnik in Wyszaków Powiat

Municipalities: Brok, Ostrów, Wąsewo and Małkinia in Ostrów Mazowiecka Powiat

Municipalities: Goworowo, Czerwin, Rzekuń, Olszewo-Borki, Lelis, Troszyn, Baranowo, Kadzidło, Czarnia, Myszyniec and Łyse in Ostrołęka Powiat.

It also comprises the following area of Podlaskie

Voivodeship: Municipality: Turośl in Kolno Powiat

Municipalities: Nowogród and Zbójna in Łomża Powiat.

## **6. Proof of origin:**

**1.** The entire production process is monitored by a special control system, which facilitates product traceability. The designation ‘miód kurpiowski’ can only be applied to the product that fully meets each of the following conditions:

- a) has been produced in the geographical area defined in Part 5, in accordance with the production method described in Part 7, and has the characteristics specified in the description in Part 4;
- b) its producers have agreed in writing to comply with the specifications, including the ‘proof of origin’ obligations;
- c) its producers have provided the information listed in Part 6 Section 3, 4, 5 to the Kurpiowsko-Mazowiecki Związek Pszczelarzy w Ostrołęce, hereinafter referred to as the ‘Association’.

**2.** Control of the production of ‘miód kurpiowski’ is based on a system of quality management and supervision designed to ensure that only products complying with this specification are marketed under the protected designation. The origin of the honey in the Kurpie region is confirmed by organoleptic and laboratory analyses, as well as by a registration system covering the extraction and market preparation of the honey, from the beginning of beehive production to the point of sale.

**3.** Any producer wishing to produce the PDO product in question must submit a declaration to the Association. Such declaration must include at least:

- a) first name and surname of the beekeeper,
- b) location of the apiary, for migratory apiaries – all locations of apiaries during the harvest season,
- c) number of colonies, race of bees,
- d) information on the sanitary status of bee colonies,
- e) a statement by the beekeeper that they undertake to comply with the specification,
- f) a certificate of completion of a qualification course in the beekeeping profession (as a ‘qualified worker’ or ‘master’) or a title of beekeeper technician,
- g) information on the required documents referred to in Part 7 Section 2.

**4.** Beekeepers should inform the Association of any changes to the elements of this declaration (Part 6 Section 3). Updates in the register should be made at least once a year after the spring orientation flight, but not later than the first of April.

**5.** Beekeepers who are not registered but wish to produce the PDO product in question must submit a declaration on proceeding with the production at the latest by 31 December of the year preceding the use of the protected geographical indication.

**6.** One label design must be used by all beekeepers. The Association distributes labels based on the data contained in the declaration. Each label should have a serial number and information identifying the beekeeper. Detailed rules and procedures for the distribution of labels among beekeepers shall be submitted to the control body. These rules and the introduced procedures may not in any way discriminate against producers who do not belong to the Association. In addition to this label, beekeepers may include on the packaging any other information and markings permitted by law.

**7.** The Association will carry out an internal inspection, independent of the inspection carried out by the authority referred to in Part 9 of the specification, of a number of beekeepers, specified in a given year, who have submitted the declarations and who intend to produce the PDO product in question. The conformity of the data provided in the declaration and compliance with the rules laid down in Part 7 shall be controlled. The final product is also inspected. The evaluation is based on organoleptic and laboratory analysis determining pollen composition, water content and HMF levels.

**8.** If, as a result of the inspection, the Association finds non-compliance with the specifications, it will refuse to issue labels. Entities may request the control body specified in Part 9 to verify compliance with the specification. If this body confirms compliance, the Association will issue labels.

**9.** The Association maintains records of beekeepers who have submitted their declaration to proceed with the production of ‘miód kurpiowski’ in time and whose apiaries are located in the area defined in Part 5. This list is forwarded to the control body along with information on the labels issued.

**10.** The beekeeper must always have the following records and documents:

- a) a copy of the declaration submitted to the Association;
- b) updated documents confirming that the apiary is under veterinary supervision;
- c) if the apiary has been transported within the geographical area defined in Section 5, information on where and when ‘miód kurpiowski’ was extracted should also be recorded;
- d) a record of labels received and used;
- e) a record of the amount of honey produced, prepared for market and sold in a given year, indicating the amount of honey under the ‘miód kurpiowski’ PDO;
- f) a record of the test results for the water content of the extracted honey and the level of HMF.

**11.** If the control body finds non-compliance at any stage of the production chain which may have resulted in the product not being produced in accordance with the specification, the product may not be marketed under the protected designation.

**12.** Producers must comply with the conditions set out in Section 6(1)(a) from the moment the application for registration is sent to the European Commission. Producers must comply with the conditions set out in Chapter 6(1)(b) and (c) no later than three months after the first publication of the application for registration in the Official Journal of the European Union.

Keeping records makes it possible to determine the origin and place of extraction of the honeys, as well as the quantity of product received and marketed. The introduction of the compulsory sale of ‘miód kurpiowski’ under a common label is intended to ensure a proper level of control, to monitor the product and its quality as well as the quantity placed on the market. The obligation to use a single label is intended to guarantee that an original product is sold under the protected designation. This obligation is not a restriction for beekeepers, as labels can be obtained by beekeepers who are affiliated in the Association and those who are not. The requirement to sell honey under a single label is also intended to reduce the possibility of counterfeiting and adulteration of honey.

## 7. Production method:

1. The apiary must be located within the area defined in Part 5. The beekeeper decides where the apiary is located.
2. The beekeeper must have documents confirming the health of the bees or a certificate that the apiary has been placed under veterinary supervision by the poviata veterinarian.
3. 'Miód kurpiowski' is produced exclusively by bees of the following races: the European dark bee (*Apis mellifera mellifera*), the Carniolan honeybee (*Apis mellifera carnica*) and the Caucasian honeybee (*Apis mellifera caucasica*) and bees resulting from the interbreeding of these races.
4. Once the harvest of 'miód kurpiowski' has begun, each time it is determined that the bees have used nectar from crop plants, the honey collected by the bees should be harvested. Small amounts of honey may remain on the frames if the proper functioning of the bee colonies requires it. The amount of honey left must not lead to a change in the taste and smell of the final product or lead to a failure to meet the requirements laid down in the description. Only after the honey has been collected and the above requirements have been met can the harvest of 'miód kurpiowski' begin again.
5. The bees may be fed after the honey has been spun before winter in accordance with the Code of Good Beekeeping Practices. The feeding of bees is not permitted during the period in which 'miód kurpiowski' is harvested. Only in exceptional cases where the proper development of bee colonies is threatened may supplemental feeding be permitted before the start of collection of honey, but it should be completed at least 14 days before the planned honey collection, and the dosage may not exceed 0.5 kg of sugar per 24 hours.
6. The honey is cold-spun in a honey extractor using centrifugal force.
7. In order to remove any impurities that may be present in the honey, this extracted honey undergoes a straining process using special strainer. The strained honey is poured into settling tanks.
8. After being clarified in tanks, the honey is decanted into various kinds of retail packaging. These are usually glass or stoneware containers with a capacity of no more than 1,400 g. Honey should be stored in tightly closed retail packaging away from light, at a temperature of 10°C to 20°C, with a humidity of no more than 75%.
9. The honey must be decanted into retail packaging in the area defined in Part 5 before the first crystallisation takes place.
10. It is not permitted for the pollen to be filtered out, or for the honey to be creamed, pasteurised or artificially heated. The temperature of the honey must not exceed +30°C at any stage of production, or +25°C after decanting to retail packaging.

11. The use of chemicals (including repellents), whether in solid, liquid or gaseous form, is forbidden during the process of harvesting the honey.
12. During the period in which the honey is harvested, the use of medicines is forbidden.
13. Honey cannot be marketed under the 'miód kurpiowski' PDO if there are visible defects, such as phase separation, fermentation, or a noticeable change in taste or odour.
14. When harvesting honey, in situations not addressed or specified in the specification, the beekeeper should adhere to the Code of Good Beekeeping Production Practices. This code was endorsed at a meeting of the Commission for the Promotion and Food Safety of Beekeeping Products on 18 February 2004. It was adopted for use by Polish beekeepers through a resolution passed during the 17<sup>th</sup> General Meeting of Delegates of the Polish Beekeeping Association on 29 February 2004, in Pszczela Wola.

### **Packaging of honey in the area**

The requirement for honey to be bottled for retail packaging in the area of extraction (defined in Part 5) stems from traditional practice and serves to guarantee the appropriate quality of the product. This restriction increases the monitoring and control over the origin of honey. According to the practice of Kurpie beekeepers, honey is usually harvested in a traditional (artisanal) way. As part of these practices, beekeepers themselves decant honey produced in their own apiaries into retail packages. 'Miód kurpiowski', which is characterised by a rapid crystallisation process, cannot be subjected to a long storage period before being decanted into retail packages. Additionally, in this way beekeepers avoid the risks associated with any change in the honey's physico-chemical and organoleptic properties that could occur when moving the honey over long distances. Transportation and related processes, i.e. prolonged movement, shaking, and re-mixing of honey, can induce crystallisation, which is also of importance for maintaining honey quality. As a hygroscopic substance, honey may absorb water and extraneous flavours or become aerated if the appropriate conditions are not maintained during transport. This may lead to failure to meet the requirements specified in the product description (water content below 19%).

Due to the restriction that the temperature of the honey must not exceed +30°C at any stage of production, any evaporation of water is very difficult. This carries the risk that if decanting and packaging is not made compulsory in the defined area, the product will not be of adequate quality. The transport and decanting of honey outside the area defined in Part 5 may also entail the risk of 'miód kurpiowski' being mixed with honey from other areas or being heated to liquefy it before it is decanted into retail packaging. Such a process may adversely affect the quality of the honey and in particular result in HMF levels exceeding those specified in the product description. If it were possible to transport honey before it is decanted into retail packages outside the area defined in Part 5, there would be a risk of 'miód kurpiowski' being mixed with other honeys or of other honeys or liquefied honey being sold under the protected designation. The aim of the restriction is therefore to maintain the high reliability of the control system and to eliminate a factor that could affect the quality of the honey sold.

## 8. Link with the geographical area:

### Geographical-ethnic link

Miód kurpiowski' comes from a region that is geographically, ethnically and agriculturally distinct, and this distinctiveness is still maintained to this day. Commonly the area is called Kurpie, but there are also two other names for it: Puszcza Zielona and Puszcza Biała or Kurpie Zielone and Kurpie Białe. Indigenous people have a preference for the second name, which has historical and ethnic reasons, not just geographical ones.

Kurpie Zielone covers the area of the north and north-east of Mazovia and the north-west of Podlasie. It consists of the lands along the right bank of the river Narew and the area around its tributaries, the Pisa, Skwa, Omulew and Rozoga, as far as the left bank of the river Orzyc. Kurpie Białe covers the area of the north-east of Mazovia and consists of the lands between the right bank of the lower course of the river Bug and its tributaries, the Tuchelka and the Brok, and the left bank of the lower course of the river Narew and its tributaries, the Wymakracz and the Orz. Kurpie Zielone abounds in rivers, streams, and lakes, which is conducive to plant life – hence its name. Kurpie Białe is drier. Its name is derived from its podzolic (white) soils. Such a description of the area was already presented in the publication *Puszcza Kurpiowska* [Kurpie Forest], by Adam Chętnik, ed. Związek Kurpiów Ostrołęka 2004, reprint of 1913.

While Poland is perceived as the country in Europe that is least 'polluted by civilisation', it is in fact Kurpie that is least exposed to this 'pollution'. There are no large or medium-sized industrial plants, and there are no large-scale commercial farms. Not a single town in the Kurpie region has over 100,000 inhabitants.

The area in which 'miód kurpiowski' is produced is characterised by low soil classification (class V and VI, class IV only in river valleys), extensive habitat use and low levels of mineral fertilisation. These habitats include:

a) meadow and scrubland (general)	45%
b) farmed land (general)	35%
c) coniferous forests (spruce and pine)	25%
d) mixed forests (pine and oak)	2%
e) deciduous forests (mainly alder)	2%
f) other areas (cities, villages, roads, industrial areas)	1%

Thanks in part to its exceptional natural assets, the area has been classed as one of the 'Green Lungs of Europe'. The exceptional nature of the region is also shown by the number of Natura 2000 sites:

- Dolina Dolnego Bugu (site code PLB 140001),
- Puszcza Biała (site code PLB 140007)  
and Dolina Omulwi i Płodownicy (site code PLB 140005).

The region also includes the Nadbużański Landscape Park, and a large number of nature reserves, such as 'Czarnia' forest reserve, 'Surowe', 'Czarny Kąt', 'Kaniston', 'Łokieć', 'Tabory', 'Minos', 'Serafin', 'Karaska', 'Podgórze', 'Olsy Płoszycie', 'Dąbrowa', 'Nagoszewo', 'Brzostowo', 'Ochudno', 'Czuraj', 'Popławy', 'Bartnia', 'Wielgolas', 'Stawinoga'. In the 'Czarnia' forest reserve there are several hundred-year-old beehive pines (pines with old hives), one of which is still home to bees.

These habitats do not cover large areas, but form a patchwork (like a mosaic), which means that there is no dominant pollen type in ‘miód kurpiowski’. At the same time, it is an area with the lowest average precipitation in Poland, not exceeding 500 mm per year. The area in which ‘miód kurpiowski’ is produced is characterised by low soil classification (class V and VI, class IV only in river valleys) and extensive habitat use. This means that the nectar yield of nectar-bearing plants is low, and this, in turn, means that the honey has to be obtained over long periods. The resulting product is obtained from the nectar of a number of plant species which flower in succession. Honeydew from deciduous and coniferous trees is only an admixture in honey. The above factors mean that the nectar yield of nectar-bearing plants is low. Therefore, it is necessary to obtain honey over long periods. The honey obtained is polyfloral, which means that no one nectar-bearing plant is dominant. The main nectar-bearing plants include (thus ‘miód kurpiowski’ contains pollen from these plants):

- in the group of meadow habitats – dandelion, white clover, thistle, *Geranium*, *Ononis*, ragged-robin, brown knapweed, bird’s-foot trefoil, mint, goldenrod;
- in the group of forest and scrubland habitats – willow, hazel, linden, maple, hawthorn, alder buckthorn, blackthorn, blueberry, heather;
- in the group of farmed land habitats – weeds: cornflower, thistle, charlock, wild radish, common chicory.

When honeydew is present in honey, it is harvested from conifers: spruce (*Picea abies*) and pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), from deciduous trees: linden (*Tilia cordata*), maple (*Acer sp.*), willow (*Salix sp.*), oak (*Quercus sp.*), plum (*Prunus sp.*), bird cherry (*Padus*). Honeydew is produced by aphids of the *Lachnide* family and scale insect of the *Coccina* family.

‘Miód kurpiowski’ is a unique product, closely linked to its area of origin. It is extracted from the nectar of wild vegetation without the use of crop plants – this has been done continuously for a very long time. Only a combination of all factors – from the purity of the environment to extensive habitat use to traditional harvesting techniques – makes it possible to produce the unique, specific honey that is the region’s hallmark. The extracted honey is characterised by a very varied pollen composition, a low water content and exceptional freshness, undisturbed during the production process. ‘Miód kurpiowski’ is therefore a product with a strong link to its area of origin. Its unique nature has resulted in a reputation that will be described below.

### **Tradition – reputation:**

In order to highlight the reputation of ‘miód kurpiowski’, the information is presented as follows: first, the very long history of forest beekeeping in the Kurpie region is described, including information on the organisation of beekeepers (from the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the present day); then, information is provided on special ways of honouring ‘miód kurpiowski’, including the festivities established in its honour: ‘Miodobranie Kurpiowskie’ [Kurpie honey harvest]. There are also references to materials in the press and other publications about ‘Kurpie honey’, as well as to methods of labelling honey introduced by beekeepers in the area, and to filmed videos depicting the product.



## 1) Long tradition of honey production in Kurpie

The tradition of beekeeping in Kurpie Zielone and Kurpie Białe dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It is well documented, known and cultivated by beekeepers – the heirs of the old honey hunters. ‘Miód kurpiowski’ was present at royal and princely courts, monasteries and magnates’ mansions. The superior quality of this honey was the reason why Kurpie forest beekeepers were granted privileges and the honey and its production were protected by royal edicts. As early as 1401, Prince Janusz of Mazovia issued what is believed to be the first royal edict on forest beekeeping (*regale bartne*), which laid down the rules of the beekeepers’ work, their rights and, above all, their duties.

Etymologists have not resolved the origin (meaning) of the word *Kurp*. It is likely that it is the local pronunciation of the word *karp* – *karpa* [stumpwood], i.e. a thick root of a tree, because just as the root is bound to the tree, the Kurpie people were and are bound to the forest. In the book *Brok i Puszcza Biała*, Krzysztof Braun, the author of the chapter ‘Bartnictwo w Puszczy Białej’ [Forest beekeeping in the Puszcza Biała forest], quotes W. Wójcicki’s description (‘Bartnictwo w dawnej Polsce’ [Forest beekeeping the old Poland], in: *Z dawnych dziejów i wspomnień naszych stulecia* [From the ancient history and memories of our century] Kraków 1875):

*‘In the middle of Mazovia, in an area crossed by two great rivers, the Bug and the Narew, in vast forests, with soil infertile for cereals, settled the Mazovian tribe Kurpie, named after the lime tree shoe and the clog (kurpie in Mazovian).’*

The Kurpie people took over the forest and, as the land they inhabited was unsuitable for agriculture, they found other ways of living and surviving, mainly hunting, fishing and, above all, forest beekeeping. Below is a description of the lifestyle of the Kurpie people of that time found in the book *Puszcza Kurpiowska*, by Adam Chętnik, ed. Związek Kurpiów Ostrołęka 2004, reprint of 1913 (p. 17):

*The Puszcza Kurpiowska forests were immense centuries ago. (...)*

*The woods echoed with the squeals and shrieks of animals, woodpeckers bored cavities into pine trees. Wild bees, abundant in the wilderness, would then occupy these cavities, build their nests and fill them with honey, which was plentiful in the lime trees, meadows and, in the autumn, the heather. The Kurpie people noticed this activity and decided to take advantage of it. They began to collect swarms of wild bees and settle them in the cavities. Later, when the natural cavities were no longer sufficient for the nests, they would carve out openings in old pines and placed new swarms in them.*

*An opening carved into a tree-hive is called *dzielnia*, and if the tree is thick, several of these can be made; a tree with multiple *dzielnie*s is called *dzianek*, or a beehive tree. If bees inhabit these pine tree-hives, they are called settled beehives, and if they are without bees, they are called empty or vacant beehives. Beehive trees were usually pines or firs over 120 years old, straight and unbranched to a certain height, not rotten inside; the main branch under the beehive is called *wręga*. A tree with protruding growths or burls, unsuitable for beehives, is called *bochniak*, and a crooked, humped tree that is difficult to climb is called *pleczowacz*. When a beekeeper selects a tree for a beehive and marks it with a so-called *klejma*, or a sign, the tree is then referred to as a *podkład*. On the selected tree, at least 12 feet above the ground, on the southeast side, the beekeeper carves out the beehive using a tool called *bartnica*, shaped like a chisel; this spot was reached using a climbing aid called *leziwo*. The opening in the beehive tree was at most 4 feet long, 15 inches deep, 4 inches wide at the front, and up to 12 inches wide inside. The upper part of the carved beehive*

is called *główna*, the middle part – *ocznik*, and the lower part – *nogi*. The long side towards the middle is called *plecy* and the open side at the front is called *dłużnia*. Inside the hive, the *główna* is crossed with thin sticks, to which the bees would attach their combs, similar to the frames used today.

The *dłużnia* was sealed with a three-inch thick board, fitting tightly, called *dłużec*, *dłużnica*, *plachta*, *zatuła*, or *zawór*. Additionally, a board longer than the *zawór*, called *śnit* or *snoza*, was nailed to the tree above with wooden nails. Spiky twigs, called *wiecha*, were stuffed between the *śnit* and the *zawór* to prevent woodpeckers and other honey-thieving birds from reaching the hive and to protect it from bad weather. Once prepared, the beehive was “painted,” that is, the inside of the *dzielnia* was smeared with bait to attract a new swarm – and the hive was “nailed,” meaning clean combs were attached to the sticks inside with melted wax, aligned in the direction the bees would build their combs. When an old beehive tree, or one with a large crown, was about to fall, its top above the beehive was called *podcina*. If a storm broke or tore off the top of a beehive tree, the hive was then called *stręp*.

Since forest-raised bees produced nearly twice as much honey as those kept in apiaries, domestic bees in stand hives were moved to the forest. For this purpose, a platform called *odra* or *stań* was constructed – essentially a scaffold of planks on poles, raised a few fathoms above the ground around a tree. Bees in hives thrived on such platforms and were well protected from moisture, mice, livestock, and thieves. Another method involved pulling a hive with bees up a tree and placing it on the main branch, referred to as a *stawka*. An empty, baited hive pulled up onto a tree to attract a swarm was known as *korzennik*, and the tree it was placed on was called *drzewo zastawne*.

Forest-raised bees, known as *borówki*, *leśne*, or *zielone*, because they lived in living green trees, were more vigorous and stronger than apiary-raised bees. They were more diligent in their work and more resilient in poor years. The Kurpie men who engaged in forest beekeeping were called *bartnicy*. Each guild or brotherhood of beekeepers had a parish priest, the guild’s promoter, who held a service on St. Bartholomew’s Day, their patron saint.

The head of the guild, called the beekeeping *starosta*, was responsible for supervising and accounting for new hives carved into trees, marking them with numbers or signs. If necessary, he would convene all the beekeepers using a designated sign – a wooden table with an agreed mark, which was passed from one to another. The *starosta* also oversaw the collection of the beekeeper’s tax, a honey tribute collected by royal authorities, as stipulated by the beekeeping law of 1559. Apart from the *pułlak*, a four-gallon measure, the following units were used: *mus*, *musa*, *kurnik*, *pokowa* – one-gallon measures, and *rażka* – a six-gallon measure. Half of the honey harvest was called *połuja*; the beekeeper collecting the honey was given one unit as a voluntary gift, called *garściowe*.

The Kurpie people to this day highly value their freedom and independence. They did not lose this freedom during feudal subjugation, nor during the partitions when Poland lost its sovereignty. They maintained their independence despite pressure from both secular and ecclesiastical authorities. Beekeepers were subject to so-called ‘royal edicts on forest beekeeping’ (*regale bartne*), royal orders and prohibitions that restricted their rights to hives and imposed tributes to the king and royal officials. But the Kurpie beekeepers refused to comply with these orders and fought against them. It was not until 1550 that the edicts were definitively abolished by a parliamentary act signed by the King. In order to safeguard their interests against the actions of royal or ducal officials and private landowners, the forest

dwellers – forest beekeepers – established a brotherhood. Its duties included the enforcement of the traditional (customary) rules and regulations that had governed the relationships between beekeepers and outsiders for years. The customary forest law functioned throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> century and half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was only by a royal decree in 1559 that the customary law was replaced with beekeeping law (Beekeeping Privileges), which was executed by Przasnysz Starosta Krzysztof Niszczycki. Niszczycki's statute, which was approved by King Sigismund the Old, was henceforth known as: *Prawo Bartne bartnikom należące, którzy według niego sprawować się i rządzić mają* [The Beekeeping Law, belonging to beekeepers, who are to conduct and govern themselves according to it]. The Beekeeping Law, which ultimately replaced the beekeeping royal edicts, was a legally established self-government with an elected beekeeping starosta, who was accountable for his activities to all the beekeepers and the beekeeping courts, chosen from among the most honest individuals ready to guard the "Beekeeping Law" under oath. The Beekeeping Privileges, recorded by Starosta Niszczycki, were confirmed and extended by Sigismund III with the Tykochin Decree on 20 December 1630. This decree was later reaffirmed in its unchanged form by Kings Władysław IV, John II Casimir, Michael I, and subsequent Polish monarchs. The Tykochin Decree established that public affairs in the forest were managed by officials elected by forest beekeepers. These officials included the beekeeping starosta, two judges, two beekeeping assessors, and a court scrivener. They were all responsible for the efficient and proper functioning of the forest beekeeping economy, and they reported their activities to the entire community, that is, to the assembly of forest beekeepers. The origins of the beekeeping law which was in force in Kurpie are also described by Adam Chętnik (2004) in his book *Puszcza Kurpiowska* (ed. Związek Kurpiów Ostrołęka 2004, reprint of a 1913 book):

*Each Kurpie family had its own homestead, where they lived together for many years, bringing in their forest earnings and belongings. These settlements were long governed by patriarchal law: the eldest male in the family, whether father or grandfather, ruled and commanded, and all household members faithfully followed his orders. However, as the settlements expanded, numerous issues of broader significance emerged, and patriarchal law was no longer sufficient, particularly as it did not cover many matters such as trade relations. Consequently, after the incorporation of Mazovia, and thus the forest, into the Crown, the Kurpie formed a unified brotherhood. This brotherhood, in line with the division of the forest into two parts – Ostrołęka and Nowogród – divided into two separate associations. Yet, this division was purely administrative; the Kurpie spirit and nature remained unified. When faced with significant matters, such as repelling an enemy, both brotherhoods would unite, and no division between them could be discerned.*

*The primary occupation of the Puszczak people [forest dwellers] was beekeeping, which was widespread throughout the forest and encompassed both Kurpie brotherhoods: Ostrołęka and Nowogród.*

*Through long-standing practice and daily life, certain rules developed in the forest, defining both external and internal relations among the forest dwellers. A customary law emerged and took shape within the beekeeping society, a law that was strictly observed and respected by all; it secured social order, framed the system of economy, administration, and judiciary, in short, the entire life of the forest dwellers. This forest law was initially unwritten, neither established nor imposed from above; it was simply a custom, passed down from generation to generation by those who had shaped it through their own lives. It was only after Mazovia came under the rule of the Polish kings and the establishment of state duties that the customary law was formally recorded for the sake of order. This codification was carried out by Krzysztof Niszczycki, the Starosta of Przasnysz, by*

royal command.

*This codification, formalised into legal terms, bore the following title: 'The Beekeeping Law, belonging to beekeepers, who are to conduct and judge themselves according to it, as described below, for the Przasnysz Starosta by the Honourable Lord Krzysztof Niszczycycki, Starosta of Przasnysz and Ciechanów, etc., established in the Year of Our Lord 1559.'*

*The second edition of this law was published in 1730 and, as a legal document, held significance and authority among the beekeepers of old Mazovia for many years.*

*Based on this document, the entire internal life of the forest people of that era can be reconstructed. The entire forest beekeeping society constituted a distinct 'republic,' referred to as a 'brotherhood' or 'association,' as noted in the law.*

*The Kurpie law was based on the community as a whole. For instance, officials were elected from among the beekeepers, and they swore their oath to the 'entire general community.' Even royal starosta, in their proclamations, always addressed 'all beekeepers and other common people in the Forest present.' Judicial verdicts were announced in the name of the king and his official, the starosta, but also 'with the consent of the entire Przasnysz community.' This community constituted a single legal entity and a unified whole, whose members were solidly bound together. Examples of this unity included institutions such as the beekeeping chest, into which fines from judicial verdicts were paid 'for the common beekeeping matter.' Similarly, there were beekeeping books, in which judicial verdicts were recorded and entrusted to the care of the entire community. These books were kept by the starosta in a chest, 'well fortified, to which everyone was to contribute, and the key to which was held by one chosen from among the beekeepers by the entire beekeeping community.' This 'chosen' individual always had to be present with the beekeeping key at the major courts of Przasnysz and Ciechanów.*

*In times of need, the starosta would summon the entire community using the beekeeping signal. This 'brotherhood' exercised complete self-government in matters of local governance. Its connection to the state was primarily manifested through the payment of state taxes, which were levied by the Przasnysz starosta for each 'bór,' or forest section. A 'bór' was defined as encompassing 60 hives, a half-bór as 30 hives, and a quarter-bór as 15 hives. According to the law of 1559, a 'rażka' of honey (approximately 6 gallons) was given for the entire 'bór,' including the beekeeping sites or clearings. This tax was later increased to a 'pudłak' (16 gallons) from a 'bór.' Furthermore, beekeepers were required to pay in kind for newly constructed hives and so-called 'kunowe' in exchange for the privilege of hunting. This tax was to be paid individually on the Feast of St. Michael at a designated location.*

*The Przasnysz starosta was responsible for ensuring these obligations were met. In the law he issued, he sternly warned that anyone failing to appear at the designated time and place would be 'suspected of intending to cause harm in the forest, given their knowledge that all the beekeepers would be gathered.' Moreover, 'if any beekeeper suffers damage in the forest on that day, the absentee will be punished, unless they have a valid reason for their absence, such as getting married, attending a funeral, or being bedridden with illness.' In such cases, the reason must be reported by a 'good and just' beekeeper on their behalf.*

(...)

*Newcomers to the Forest were welcomed by the beekeeping society, provided they met a number of conditions concerning their moral worth. This law states:*

*'These new beekeepers, referred to as newcomers, each must swear an oath, as described, to be faithful, just, and obedient to the Beekeeping Court and Office. They must be accepted into the law without any delay, unless they have a disqualifying reason, such as being of bad birth, born out of wedlock, or having parents of ill repute.'* This stipulation is further explained by the law: *'Just as weeds and thistles are pulled from the fields to keep the grain pure, so must the Beekeepers ensure that thieves and bastards are not among their fellowship and brotherhood'* (...). *'They should diligently inquire into the background of the newcomer, ensuring they have witnesses and present their birth records before the court.'* The beekeeping association placed immense value on the honesty and moral integrity of its members, as further evidenced in their judicial practices.

*If an outsider meets the aforementioned conditions and is of 'good repute,' the only remaining requirement is a commitment to solidarity with the entire beekeeping community. Thus, the newcomer swears an oath not to assist anyone 'who might oppose our commonwealth,' to do 'everything necessary for the benefit and understanding of beekeeping,' and to stand against and defend against any unjust accusations about the beekeepers.*

*After making this solemn pledge, the newcomer was allocated a 'bór,' a section of forest in which he could manage his affairs independently and become a member of the beekeeping community, equal to all other citizens of the forest. From then on, he was protected under the beekeeping law and could only be expelled from the brotherhood for serious offenses such as theft or murder. The confiscation of the bór and expulsion from the forest, known as 'zgodzenie,' was the highest penalty in the eyes of the beekeepers.*

It is worth noting that it was in this area that the customary law was formed, which formed the basis for the development of the Beekeeping Law, which was then applied throughout the Republic. It was also in this area that it lasted the longest. It was abolished in 1801, although self-government still existed in 1815. Bee-keeping came to a definitive end after the November Uprising, when the Kurpie people were expelled from the forest for their participation in the uprising. The tradition, knowledge, and experience of the Kurpie people remained and became the foundation of apiculture in the region. Beekeeping was first carried out in log hives, which were based on the original tree-hives, and then in frame hives. For centuries, the sale of honey and wax was the main source of income for the local forest beekeepers. All the honey harvested was sold. Only the wealthiest kept some for their own consumption. To this day, in the tradition of the local people, honey is mainly a medicine and not just a food product. An example of an old remedy (from 1944) based on honey decoction (photo 1).

**Photo 1** – ‘Miód kurpiowski’ also used for medicines; example of a 1944 vessel.



The skills of the Kurpie people are the result of centuries of beekeeping tradition and respect for these very useful insects, the bees. This is reflected in the varied and interesting customs of the forest dwellers. For example, on Christmas Eve, after returning from the midnight mass, they would visit their hives, knock on the walls and tell the bees that ‘Our Lord Jesus is born’. Similarly, at Easter, after returning from the Mass of the Resurrection, some beekeepers would go to their hives, knock on their walls, and ‘tell’ the bees about the joyful Resurrection of the Lord. All this demonstrates the special attitude of the inhabitants of the Puszcza Zielona towards these insects. More details on this subject can be found in: Kielak Bernard, *Zwyczaje Doroczne Kurpiowskiej Puszczy Zielonej* [Annual Customs of the Kurpiowska Puszcza Zielona], Muzeum Kultury Kurpiowskiej, Ostrołęka 2005.

The rich beekeeping traditions of Kurpie are confirmed in many publications and studies. Those who are interested in learning more about their heritage are invited to read such publications as, e.g.:

- 1) Baranowski I., *Najstarszy opis Puszczy Kurpiowskiej* [The oldest description of the Puszcza Kurpiowska forest], *Ziemia*, vol. II, 1911.
- 2) Chętnik Adam, 1913, *Puszcza Kurpiowska* [The Puszcza Kurpiowska forest] – reprint of the book was published by Związek Kurpiów z Ostrołęki in 2004.
- 3) Chętnik A., *Życie puszczańskie Kurpiów* [The forest life of the Kurpie people], Warsaw 1971.
- 4) Kielak Bernard, *Zwyczaje Doroczne Kurpiowskiej Puszczy Zielonej* [Annual Customs of the Kurpiowska Puszcza Zielona], Muzeum Kultury Kurpiowskiej, Ostrołęka 2005.
- 5) Kuczyńska Urszula, *Bartnictwo Kurpiowskiej Puszczy Zielonej* [Forest beekeeping in the Kurpiowska Puszcza Zielona], Pszczelarska Oficyna Wydawnicza, Muzeum Północno-Mazowieckie w Łomży 2004.

- 6) Olędzki J., *Pasiecznictwo na terenie Kurpiowskiej Puszczy Zielonej od końca XIX wieku do połowy XX wieku* [Apiculture in the Kurpiowska Puszcza Zielone from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century], [in:] *Kurpie Puszcza Zielona*, ed. A. Kutrzeba Pojnarowa, vol. II, Wrocław – Warsaw – Kraków 1964.
- 7) Piaścik Fr., *Osadnictwo w Puszczy Kurpiowskiej* [Settlement in the Puszcza Kurpiowska], Warsaw 1939.
- 8) Rafacz J., *Regale bartne na Mazowszu w późniejszym średniowieczu* [Beekeeping royal edicts in Masovia in the late Middle Ages], Lviv 1938.
- 9) Rundstein J., *Cztery księgi bartne nowogrodzkie z XVII i XVIII wieku* [The four Nowogród beekeeping books of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century], Warsaw 1928.
- 10) Żukowski R., *Bartnictwo w Zagajnicy Łomżyńskiej w okresie od XVI do połowy XIX wieku* [Forest beekeeping in Zagajnica Łomżyńska in the period from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century], Białystok 1964.

Much detailed material on the history and tradition of beekeeping in Kurpie can also be found in Nowogród near Łomża, where the Kurpie Museum was established on 19 June 1927. It collects beehives, apiaries, tools and other equipment used by forest beekeepers in their work with bees and in the production of honey. Interesting objects (relics) of Kurpie material culture have been collected here. The abundance of these materials is a testimony to the rich traditions and long history of beekeeping and apiculture in Kurpie.

The rich beekeeping heritage has survived to the present day, and today's beekeepers try to produce honey according to learned principles while respecting the old practices. Beekeeping tradition dictated that beekeepers should belong to beekeeping associations. If we follow the history of the Polish Beekeeping Association, we can see the emergence and transformation of beekeeping organisations both in Poland and in Kurpie. The latest chapter began with the introduction of a new administrative division into 49 voivodeships in the 1970s. In 1977 the Voivodeship Beekeeping Association was established in Ostrołęka. Its first president was engineer Henryk Jankowski. At that time, there were about 2,000 beekeepers in 34 circles. By the end of the 1980s, however, the number of circles had fallen to 20 and the number of beekeepers to 1,000. The 1990s saw a further decline in the number of beekeeping circles, beekeepers and, consequently, bee colonies. The new administrative division brought further changes. The Wojewódzki Związek Pszczelarzy w Ostrołęce [the Voivodeship Beekeepers' Association in Ostrołęka] became the Kurpiowsko-Mazowiecki Związek Pszczelarzy w Ostrołęce. At that time there were only 11 active circles and 214 beekeepers.

Beekeeping in Kurpie is currently characterised by the small number of beekeepers – the result of environmental conditions which make it difficult to keep hives. The Kurpiowsko-Mazowiecki Związek Pszczelarzy w Ostrołęce (beekeepers' association in Ostrołęka) has nearly 180 beekeepers in 9 circles and owns about 5,000 bee colonies. This is estimated as a half of all beekeepers in the area, with the total number of colonies not exceeding 8,000.

## **2) Miodobranie Kurpiowskie [Kurpie Honey Harvest]**

The celebration of 'miód kurpiowski' has a very long tradition. One of the earliest descriptions of the celebration of the honey harvest can be found in Adam Chętnik's book *Puszcza Kurpiowska* (2004) (reprint of a 1913 book). The author quotes the solemn arrival of a celebrating group of Puszcza residents at the beekeeping starosta:

*Only in July did he set out again to the forest, remaining there until the completion of the honey harvest. The first honey harvest was celebrated solemnly by the Kurpie people, it was like a festival in the Wilderness. The description below best illustrates the honey harvest in the reader's imagination:*

*'Towards the grove of Szymon, the beekeeping starosta, the whole crowd was approaching, like a wave coming with a flood, until finally, like a thunderclap, a song resounded, clearly reaching Szymon's ears:*

*Hej, ptaszyna śpiewa,  
A barć się zieleni,  
Pszczołka miódek miewa  
Z wiosny do jesieni.*

*Patrzaj człeku miły  
Jak Bóg dba o ciebie!  
Robaczek bez siły  
O twym myśli chlebie.*

*Oj, wy pszczołki stare,  
Oj, miódku kochany,  
Przez was mamy wiarę,  
Przez was Piast obrany.*

*Jak też w waszym ulu  
Rząd sprawia się w zgodzie  
Bierz z nich przykład, królu,  
Bierz przykład, narodzie!*

*A chłopci próżniacy,  
Uczcie się od pszczołki,  
Jak się to przy pracy  
Napęlnia stodółki.*

*With the last words of the song, the crowd rushed into the cottage. The girls, as lovely as raspberries, the boys dressed in dark brown coats with blue lapels, in white trousers laced at the bottom and shoes fastened with leather straps. The girls in blue, white, red, or striped skirts with black and red bodices, beneath which white shirts gleamed.*

*One pair after another walked in order and continued singing, and Szymon liked this singing, for he said:*

*'Ah, yes, you are right, children, you are right. Yes, yes, the little bee is a wise, very wise creature. God created it intentionally for people, so that they could take example from it. Oh, oh, what order there is in that hive. So clean, honest, industrious. Yes, only honesty and diligence, and at the same time freedom. Each little bee buzzes freely, but also works, because prudent work does not limit freedom, does not oppose liberty. Order is only needed for our benefit.'* Saying this, he took a few steps forward, wobbling on his feet due to old age.

*When he fell silent, Józef stepped out from the crowd, bowed low with his black, cylindrical felt hat, greeted him, placed the hat back on his head, and began to speak:*



*'How do you do, Szymon? Has God blessed you well with honey?  
For we have come to you for the July honey. (...)*

Further on we read about the custom of collecting the honey during the festival. According to tradition, this honour fell to one of the most skilful beekeepers. He had a rope and a board attached to it, and a net curtain over his face to protect him from the bees.

*'Our forest was not as it is today, and honey held greater reverence among people than it does now. In the past, our country was famed for its honey. They made the wheelwright and the beekeeper the first king of this nation! – honey is a divine blessing,' said Szymon.*

*'Well, before the sun sets,' shouted Józef 'we need to collect a few honeycombs. Quickly, girls!' he had barely finished when the girls swiftly surrounded Kuba and placed a wreath of flowers on his hat. This was a sign that Kuba was to gather the honey. He was one of the more skilled beekeepers. Kuba must have known this duty would fall to him, for he was already in full gear. He wore a sturdy rope, braided from poplar bark, with a piece of board attached to it. With one tug of his hand, he untied the knot, and the rope fell from his shoulders. The beekeeper threw the thinner end over a branch, then sat on the board and began hoisting himself up, pushing against the tree with his feet. When he reached the hive, he let down a mesh veil over his face, tied the rope securely to the tree, and pulled up a pot of fire on a hemp string from the ground. He turned the bag inside out, took a long knife from it, stuck it into the tree, and then placed the smoking pot to the hive entrance and blew on the embers: the hive buzzed, the hum grew louder, and a swarm of bees rushed out. The bees stung Kuba, but he paid no heed, removed the broom from the hive, took out the threshold, uncovered the opening, and cut the honeycombs, careful not to disturb the comb with the queen. He extracted a vast number of combs, having climbed the highest hive, which the old Szymon no longer had the strength to reach. Szymon himself had carved this hive and made a large opening in it, but for six or seven years he had been unable to access it. So he reserved it for the July honey. While Kuba was thus engaged, the girls sang songs praising the riches of the forest:*

*Bogata jest Palestyna,  
Lecz Puszcza bogatsza i basta!  
Tam rzeką miód płynąć zaczyna,  
A nam na drzewach wyrasta.*

*Kuba finished the honey harvest, sealed the hive, tied it with birch bark to prevent snow and cold from entering during winter. He untied the knot with a single pull, grasped the loose end of the rope, and began to descend slowly. The rope slid over the branch like a pulley, and he merely pushed himself away from the tree trunk with his back, singing about the reward he would receive:*

*Dostane ci garściowe  
Miodu choć połowę  
Dla siebie.*

*The 'garściowe' [handful] was usually a piece of honeycomb given to the gatherer, never more, so the crowd sang back to him:*

*Damy ci, oj, damy,  
Byleś kunne płacił,  
A tak byś zanadto  
W dzień jeden zbogacił.*

*Amidst the singing, Kuba slid down the pine, the rope creaking as it slipped over the branch. He grabbed the branches with his hands, stripping off needles and scattering them on the heads of the young people standing around the hive; they stood in pairs, one behind the other, around the hive, boys with their girls, each with the one he fancied. This youth, from various parts of the forest, had come for the celebration, singing so that the echo carried through the wilderness. Beside them stood the older, dignified Kurpie men, while among the young and old, a swarm of forest children darted about. As Kuba neared the ground, the singing ceased, and only the bees buzzed, swarming back into the hive. When Kuba touched the ground, he gave a strong pull on the rope, which quickly slipped off the branch and fell with a thud. Meanwhile, the girls were decorating a bowl with flowers and adorning Kuba with forest herbs. Soon the pairs parted, and old Szymon called out:*

*'Boys, light the fire, for it's getting dark, and you, kinsman, prepare the honey properly... Musicians, you have ten Schillings, now play away. At this command, the violins, basses, and drum began to play in unison, and everyone joined the dance. The forest looked enchanted, the people in it like spirits. Piles of wood burned around, sending smoke skyward, and between the old and new pines flashed green, blue, and red bodices, ribbons fluttering in braids, and colourful aprons. The youth revelled merrily. Cheers echoed cheerfully, and the flames leapt higher and higher. Only by the tent, where the elders sipped honey, did the fire die down. Darkness fell all around, and there was a moment of silence, for even the wind had stilled. This tranquillity was broken by the crowing of a rooster...'*

*The Kurpie people sold the products of their industry to the Germans, who came to the forest markets along the route from Szczytno (Ortelsburg). The main items of this trade were honey and wax, as well as hides and amber, mined in certain areas of the forest.*

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in order to celebrate the status of 'miód kurpiowski' as a product inextricably linked with the local forests, the idea of holding a festival in honour of the honey was revived. Following the tradition of fairs and the first honey festival in Kurpie, where large quantities of honey and wax were sold in the past, it was decided to organise the 'Miodobranie Kurpiowskie' [Kurpie honey harvest]. It was held for the first time after a long break in September 1976 in the square outside the Primary School in Myszyniec. The event included the presentation of honey collection process, an educational film about the forest and performances by school choirs. The role of the host – the beekeeping starosta – was played by the well-known folk storyteller and social activist, Stanisław Ceberek. In 1977, The Miodobranie Kurpiowskie was moved to a forest clearing in Zawodzie, where the ritual of harvesting honey was re-enacted. It was led by Franciszek Jaksina from Bandyście, the area's well-known beekeeper and folk storyteller. In addition to the re-enactment, there were performances by Kurpie folk groups and guests were invited to taste regional dishes.

In the following years, the honey harvest festival was enriched with new elements and attractions. The main element of the event was always a ritual spectacle in which beekeeping customs were presented according to prepared scenarios. The show was performed by Kurpie regional bands. It was complemented by artistic performances of folk groups from the Kurpie region and other parts of the country, as well as other music, dance and farm bands. The stage in Zawodzie has also hosted foreign folk groups, including those from Denmark (1984), Russia (1990), France (1993), and Slovakia (1994).

The Miodobranie Kurpiowskie is also full of events not related to the honey harvest, because just like the fairs, the honey harvest plays an important cultural role. There are folklore performances, handicrafts with demonstrations of how to make them, regional dishes, folk bands, folklore dance groups and various forms of competition between young men and young women, now forgotten but reminded. For example: climbing a tall, smooth pole to get a garland, or using sheep shears to cut out the world-famous Kurpie cut-outs.

The honey harvest festival takes place in a forest clearing in Zawodzie near Myszyniec. The day-long event consists of a ritual spectacle 'Podbieranie miodu' presenting the honey collection process, artistic performances by regional bands, exhibitions of folk crafts, and fairs of folk art and beekeeping equipment. Beekeepers offer fresh honey and housewives offer bakery products made with honey. The honey presented and sold here is renowned. Over 60 beekeepers gather in the clearing at Zawodzie with their bee heritage. They invite visitors from various regions to taste their products and encourage them to make purchases (photos 2 and 3).

**Photos 2 and 3** – Beekeepers' stands at the Miodobranie Kurpiowskie.



The opinion that 'miód kurpiowski' is second to none is shared by its consumers from Warsaw. There is no substitute for 'miód kurpiowski'. It is not unusual for visitors to a honey harvest to persistently look for a particular beekeeper from whom they buy honey, because they know that beekeeper and they know that he or she collects honey according to old beekeeping principles. The popularity of this product is reflected in the number of people who attend and participate in the festival. It is the biggest event in the region. It is estimated that between 20,000 and 35,000 people attended the Miodobranie Kurpiowskie festival every year between 2002 and 2006 (photos 4 and 5). Another indication of the popularity of the festival is that, in the course of a single day in 2005, approximately 12 tonnes of honey was sold there.

**Photos 4 and 5.** The Miodobranie Kurpiowskie is becoming more and more popular with locals and tourists every year.



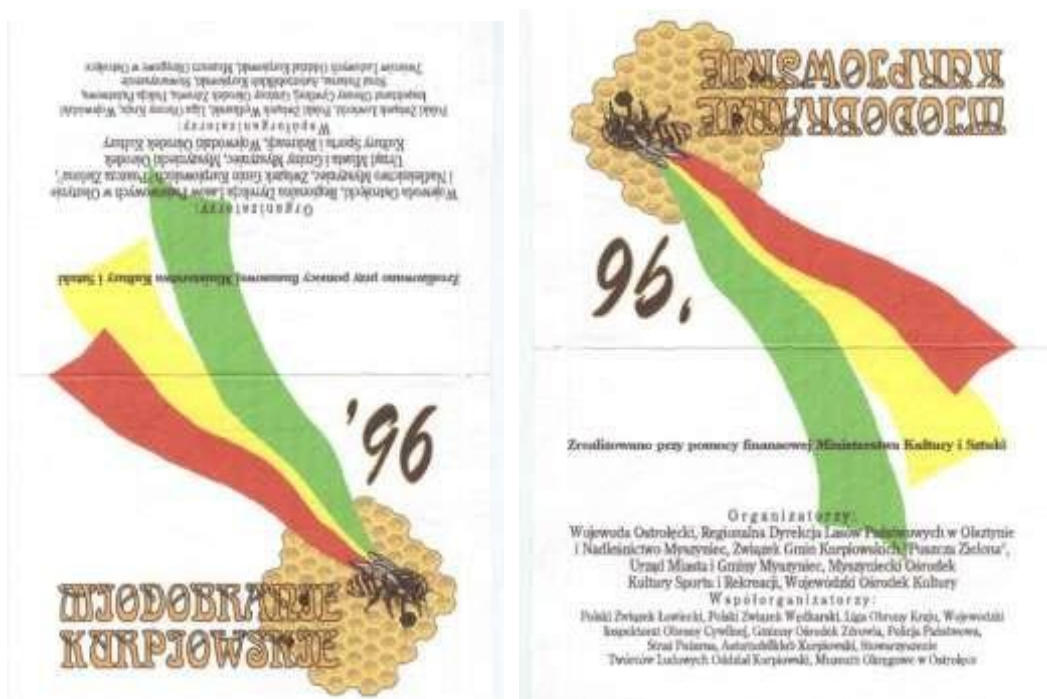
The folklore event Miodobranie Kurpiowskie (photo 6) is probably the only event of its kind in the country. Despite many changes and additions, the festival still serves several important purposes: it reminds the inhabitants of the Puszcza Zielona of their rich traditions and beekeeping customs, it gives contemporary and folk artists the opportunity to present their work, it integrates the local community, and at the same time promotes the region among tourists from Poland and abroad, who are increasingly coming to the honey harvest festival. Over the years the Miodobranie Kurpiowskie has developed its fundamental form and its own history.

**Photo 6.** Dozens of people take part in the honey harvest festival every year.



Special invitations to participate in the Miodobranie Kurpiowskie are also prepared (photos 7 and 8). All of this testifies to the popularity and reputation of this holiday and its main attraction, honey. In 2004, in the second edition of the Competition for the Best Tourist Product, the Polish Tourism Organisation awarded a certificate to the Miodobranie Kurpiowskie. The certificate is awarded to products that have significantly contributed to the increase in tourist arrivals to Poland or to the quantitative growth of domestic tourism. The winners received their awards during the TT Warsaw Tour & Travel International Tourism Fair in Warsaw.

**Photo 7.** Invitation to the Miodobranie Kurpiowskie, 1996.



**Photo 8.** Invitation to the Miodobranie Kurpiowskie, 1995.



There is a lot of evidence that the Miodobranie Kurpiowskie is held in honour of ‘miód kurpiowski’. Numerous references to tradition show the long historical continuity of this festival. Both the time and the venue of the festivities are in keeping of Kurpie traditions that go back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Miodobranie Kurpiowskie traditionally begins with a Holy Mass in the Collegiate Church in Myszyniec. After the mass, a series of events are organised, including the ritual spectacles ‘Podbieranie miodu’ [Honey collection], ‘Egzamin na bartnika’ [Beekeeper’s examination], ‘Składanie przysięgi bartniczej’ [Beekeeper’s oath] and ‘Przysięga Starosty Bartnego’ [Beekeeping starosta’s oath]. The most Kurpie-like part of the honey harvest is the beekeeper’s examination. One has to demonstrate the customary knowledge in this field, such as how to collect honey, how to make a tree-hive and how to place a bee colony in it. It is customary to recall the content of the beekeeper’s oath and the beekeeping starosta’s oath, the texts of which date back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century:

1) Beekeeper’s Oath: *‘Ja N. Przysięgam Panu Wszechmogącemu w chwalebnej Trójcy jedynemu, Królowi Jo. Mci panu naszemu milemu, panu staroście tutejszemu żadnych nie czyniwał, puszczy puzarem nie popaliłem, pszczoł żadnemu bartnikowi w drzewach pospolitych nie działem, anim miodu gotowego nikomu chądziebnie nie bierał. Żywności ani naczyń bartnych bartnikom nie bierałem. Drzew z pszczolami i prożnych nie rąbywałem, ani wiadomie ogniem żadnegom nie popalił. Rojów pszczoł z puszczy do domu swego nie nosilem, anim ich też żadnemu nie przedawał. Z strzelcami prożnymi, którzy żadnemu do złego nie radził, ale owszem na kogom co wiedział opowiadać powinien będę. Jako z rusznicą nie chodzę strzelać zwierza i na*

*swój pożytek obracać, ale do dworu wszystko oddaję. Tak mi Panie Boże pomóż i męka Jego święta.'*

2) Beekeeping Starosta's Oath: *'Ja N. przysięgam Panu Bogu Wszechmogącemu Troycy jedynemu, Królowi Imci panu naszemu Miłościwemu, Imci panu staroście łomzińskiemu i wszystkiemu gminowi bartnemu, iż będę w urzędzie moim bartnym wiernym, w odbieraniu i w oddawaniu Imci panu staroście łomzińskiemu prowentów Króla Imci od bartników mnie zleconych. Sprawiedliwości każdemu z wynalazkiem sędziów bartnych, nie ze swego rozumu, ale wedle uchwalonego prawa czynić powinien będę. Nic się nie obawiając na dary, na strach, ani na żadna groźbę nie mając względu na bogatego, ani na ubogiego, ani na żadnego powinnego bliskiego i dalekiego. Tak mi Panie Boże dopomóż i Twoja Święta Niewinna Męka.'*

During the festivities, there are also demonstrations of the traditional way of harvesting honey, that is climbing a tree with a beehive. This motif is also used on posters announcing the upcoming festival (photo 9).

**Photo 9** – The motif on a poster informing about the Miodobranie Kurpiowskie (2004), referring to the 'first honey harvest'.



### 3) Materials on television, in the press and in publications

The product's reputation can also be gauged from numerous articles and documents indicating that it has become part of the culture and identity of the people who live here.

Telewizja Polska [Polish Television] recorded and aired films on beekeeping traditions in Kurpie:

1. in 1985, the film *Puszcza Zielona* aired on channel TVP1,
2. in 1997, the film *Bursztyn i Miód w tradycji kurpiowskiej* [Amber and honey in Kurpie tradition] aired on channel TVP1,
3. in 2002, the documentary *Kurpiowskie Miodobranie* [Kurpie Honey Harvest] aired on channel TVP3, as well as agricultural programs on channel TVP1.

Information on the product and related events is published in the national, regional and local press. Each year, the press provides information about the planned venue, organisation, expected attractions and competitions, patronage and sponsors. Later, reports on the festivities are published and newspapers also publish lists of winners of individual competitions. Below are some examples of information from the press about 'miód kurpiowski' and the honey harvest.

*Tygodnik Ostrołęcki* published an article on 26 August 2003 entitled 'Deszcz nie tylko na pszczelich skrzydełkach' [Rain not only on a bee's wings], describing the 26<sup>th</sup> Kurpiowskie Miodobranie:

*The weather dealt an unwelcome surprise to the organisers of this year's Miodobranie Kurpiowskie --for the first time in several years, it rained and was cold. Some jestingly attributed it to the event taking place not on its usual last Sunday of August, but on the penultimate. Nonetheless, spirits remained high among guests and exhibitors. This year's honey harvest festival occurred on Sunday, August 24<sup>th</sup>, marking the 26<sup>th</sup> edition of this flagship folk event. Over a hundred folk artists set up their stalls on the meadow in Zawodzie.*

*'This was the essence of the honey harvest festival, to highlight the creativity of folk artists,' stressed Krzysztof Kozon from the Myszyniec Centre for Culture, Sport and Leisure.*

#### **Social gathering opportunity**

*'The honey harvest is not only a celebration of honey and a platform for the presentation of folk art, but also an opportunity for social gatherings,' said Witold Makiela, deputy starosta of Ostrołęka, at the inauguration of the 26<sup>th</sup> edition of the Miodobranie Kurpiowskie. 'And that's not unimportant, because we often have the chance to meet some of our friends only once a year, and that's usually at the festival. (...)*

*'We aim for each edition of the honey harvest to be more engaging and better than the last, turning it into a hallmark not just for the municipality but for the entire region,' said Bogdan Glinka, Mayor of Myszyniec. In keeping with local tradition, the Mayor appeared at the festival dressed in traditional costume. (...)*

*'We pledge allegiance to the starosta of this honey harvest, promising to faithfully execute the orders of the beekeeping starosta and his jurisdiction (...) ensuring we do not let the forest go up in smoke', the participants of the event had to swear such an oath, as required by Witold Kuczyński, the municipal starosta of the Miodobranie Kurpiowskie. This year, the role of the beekeeping starosta fell to Władysław Gwiazda.*

The article goes on to say that the Miodobranie Kurpiowskie was delayed due to rain. Despite this, participants were able to see the ritual spectacle 'Podbieranie miodu' [Honey collection],



performances by the Kurpianeczka singing group, a choir led by Henryk Gadomski from Ostrołęka, as well as bands and cabaret groups. The article also included a statement by one of the beekeepers, the owner of an apiary with 120 hives. He raised an important issue of honey adulteration. Unfortunately, even among the honeys presented, many were adulterated. Such honeys are prepared and processed too quickly and incorrectly. Sometimes they are overheated and do not crystallise properly, a process that takes at least a month. Some honeys on the stands were liquid, which could indicate artificial heating at very high temperatures, which is unacceptable. The situation described above suggests that dishonest producers are trying to take advantage of the reputation of 'miód kurpiowski' and deceive consumers. Information on honey prices and sponsors is also provided.

In another article, 'Miód folklor i konfitura' [Honey, folklore and jam], published in *Gazeta Współczesna* in 2004, we find an announcement of the 26<sup>th</sup> Miodobranie Kurpiowskie:

*MYSZYNIĘC. On Sunday 29 August, for the twenty-seventh time, the Zawodzie clearing near Myszyniec will host the national folklore event Miodobranie Kurpiowskie. Visitors from Poland and abroad will be able to enjoy a wide range of attractions, including authentic Kurpie honey with a unique taste.*

*Over eighty folk artists from Kurpie, Masuria, and Podlasie will present their products in a clearing in Zawodzie. This year, visitors coming to Mysliwiec by car will be able to use the car parks next to the clearing. 1,500 parking spaces are available. On previous occasions, after parking their cars, visitors had to walk three kilometres to the clearing.*

*'We have also prepared attractive prizes for those who use the car parks,' says Krzysztof Kozon, Director of the Myszyniec Centre for Culture, Sport and Leisure. 'We will draw them during the event.'*

*The organisers invite you to take part in contests for best jam, yeast cake, liqueur, chamois beer, as well as competitions in honey extraction and playing the ligawka.*

The article continues by stating that the event was held under the patronage of the Marshal of Mazowieckie Voivodeship and provides information about the co-organisers of the event. It is followed by the agenda of the 2004 festival.

Kronika Mazowiecka [The Mazovia Chronicle], in the series 'Miesiąc na Mazowszu' [A month in Mazovia], included an article by Agnieszka Bastek of the Myszyniec Centre for Culture, Sport and Leisure, titled *Miodobranie* [Honey harvest], reporting on the 27<sup>th</sup> Miodobranie Kurpiowskie.

*On August 29<sup>th</sup>, the forest clearing in Zawodzie near Myszyniec hosted the 27<sup>th</sup> Miodobranie Kurpiowskie, organised by the Myszyniec Centre for Culture, Sport and Leisure, in collaboration with the Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Myszynca association and with financial support from the Mazowieckie Voivodeship self-government, Związek Gmin Kurpiowskich, Ostrołęka Powiat Starosty, and the Myszyniec Town Hall. The main hosts were native Kurpie representatives: Irena Górka and Witold Kuczyński.*

*The festivities began with a holy mass celebrated in the Kurpie dialect at the Myszyniec collegiate church. The church was filled with Kurpie ladies and gents dressed in traditional folk costumes, and beekeepers offering the fruits of their labour. After the mass, a splendid procession of wagons carrying people set off from the church to the meadow. Meanwhile, the results and awards for the participants of the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Kurpiowskie Miodobranie Run were being announced and presented.*

Following this, the Mayor of Myszyniec, Bogdan Glinka, and the Director of the Myszyniec Centre for Culture, Sport and Leisure, Krzysztof Kozon, officially opened the 27<sup>th</sup> Miodobranie Kurpiowskie. The stage was then taken over by folk groups participating in the ritual spectacle 'Podbieranie Miodu,' directed by Anna Pietrzak. During the performance, the stage almost resembled a beehive, with bees everywhere, attracted by the sweet smell of honey on the tables. (...)

Next, the folk group from Czarnia presented a fragment of the ritual performance 'Kupiec' [Merchant] related to the Kurpie wedding. Traditional contests were a highlight, including competitions for the best kozicowe beer titled 'Fest Kozicak,' the best liqueur – 'Fest nioducha,' the best ligawka player – 'Fest Grac,' 'Fest Placek' (for the best pie) and 'Fest Pozidla' (for the best jam). There was also a contest for extracting honey from combs – 'Fest Wyciskaca.' The day continued with performances by various musical and folk groups, but honey remained the main attraction throughout the event.

Also in *Gazeta Współczesna*, you could find coverage of the honey harvest festival and browse the list of winners of all competitions. This shows that local readers are looking for this information and that it is relevant to them.

Bernard Kielak and Tadeusz Żebrowski described the Miodobranie Kurpiowskie in *Kalendarium imprez regionalnych Kurpiowszczyzny* [Calendar of regional events in Kurpie] (Ostrołęka 2005) as follows:

*One of the oldest and most widespread economic activities in the Puszcza Zielona was forest beekeeping. Its origins date back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and its development was significantly linked to its incorporation into an organised framework with its own laws, privileges, structure, and authorities. The beekeeping organisation effectively protected its members while also requiring beekeepers to pay a honey tribute to the beekeeping starosta by St. Michael's Day (29<sup>th</sup> September).*

*The tradition of the autumn meeting with the beekeeping starosta was revived in 1976, following the establishment of Ostrołęka Voivodeship. A group of cultural and tourism activists, along with local and regional authorities, all contributed to the creation of this folklore event.*

*'Miodobranie' takes place in a forest clearing in Zawodzie on the last Sunday of August. The event serves several purposes: it reminds the region's residents of their rich beekeeping traditions and customs, provides folk artists with a platform to showcase their work, integrates the local community, and promotes the region both nationally and internationally. The core element of the event is a ritual spectacle depicting forest beekeeping customs based on a prepared script, along with forest folklore presented by local folk groups.*

*Over the years, the event has been enriched with additional attractions: popular science sessions on beekeeping, exhibitions of beekeeping equipment, agricultural produce, harvest wreaths, book fairs, and more.*

*Recreational and sporting events (e.g., archery, weightlifting, target shooting, pole climbing), fishing competitions, cross-country runs, and tourist rallies have also been introduced to add variety.*

*In the past nearly three decades, the Miodobranie Kurpiowskie has grown into a significant cultural, commercial, and recreational event, attracting up to several thousand people. If you haven't yet been part of this crowd and haven't bought the forest honey, you must visit Zawodzie in the autumn.*

#### 4) Labelling

‘Miód kurpiowski’ has long enjoyed a reputation for quality and was sold as honey originating from this region. The labels provided information about its origin and extraction location. The reference to its Kurpie heritage was considered a mark of quality and uniqueness. For beekeepers, selling honey with a reference to its place of origin has been and continues to be a matter of pride, while for buyers, it is a guarantee of the highest quality. Below, you can see examples of labels used over the years (photos 10, 11, and 12).

**Photo 10** – example of a label using the designation ‘miód kurpiowski’



**Photo 11** – example of a label using the designation ‘miód kurpiowski’



**Photo 12** – example of a label using the designation ‘miód kurpiowski’



##### **5) Why is ‘miód kurpiowski’ a polyfloral honey?**

The economic and industrial ‘underdevelopment’ of the area is beneficial to the quality of honey produced in Kurpie. Nectar plants for bees are scattered and heterogeneous in the region. Difficult natural conditions limit the number of apiaries and the number of hives in apiaries. As a result, beekeeping in the area today is more of a hobby than a profession, practised not so much for profit as for love of the bees – sacred worms, as they are traditionally called in Kurpie. In the Kurpie region, it is the beekeeper, rather than the bees, that as a rule has to seek out the nectar (so that the bee does not get tired). He or she positions the hives in good honey-producing locations. Uninterrupted since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, ‘miód kurpiowski’ has been linked to traditional methods of extraction dictated by natural conditions, primarily bee pastures—meadows and forests. The centrifugation of honey is tied to the season and location of its production. Grasslands (meadows, pastures and fallow land) are the source of the spring nectar honeys obtained from May to June. Mainly coniferous forests (spruce and pine) are the source of summer honeydew-nectar honey harvested from July to August. Traditionally, the first harvest of honey, produced from spring nectar, takes place in the first half of June, usually coinciding with the end of the acacia blooming period. The second harvest of honey, produced from summer nectar, which concludes the honey-collecting season, takes place in the second half of July. This period traditionally aligns with the end of the harvest and the second mowing of meadows.

The traditional principle of harvesting honey is maintained in obtaining ‘miód kurpiowski’. The high level of skill of the local beekeepers is particularly due to the preservation of traditional apiary management, closely linked to this region. These skills are reflected in the selection of sites for apiaries and, in particular, the keeping of apiaries in areas where the nectar yield is low or very low. The times of collecting and (cold) spinning honey and the method of keeping and decanting the honey are determined by centuries-old tradition. Appropriate parameters for ‘miód kurpiowski’, especially those aimed at making sure that it remains of the highest quality, are possible only if very great care is taken in the process of

obtaining the honey. This requires the beekeeper to have a great deal of skill and love for the work they do, an understanding of bee behaviour, as well as knowledge of the processes of the natural environment.

#### **9. Control:**

1. Voivodeship Inspector of the Agricultural and Food Quality in Warsaw, ul. Marszałkowska 115, 00-102 Warsaw,
2. BioCert Małopolska Sp. z o.o., ul. Lubicz 25a, 31-503 Kraków,
3. COBICO Sp. z o.o., ul. Grzegórzecka 77, 31-559 Kraków.

#### **10. Labelling:**

All beekeepers engaged in the buying-in and further market preparation of honey under the protected name are required to use one type of label. Kurpiowsko-Mazowiecki Związek Pszczelarzy w Ostrołęce (beekeepers' association in Ostrołęka) will decide on its model. Each label must include information such as:

- a) volume of the vessel,
- b) the address of the manufacture;
- c) veterinary registry number,
- d) serial label number,
- e) the Protected Geographical Indication symbol,
- f) and other information required by Polish law.

All beekeepers and entities engaged in the buying-in and further processing of honey under the protected name are required to use one type of label. Labels will be distributed through the Kurpiowsko-Mazowiecki Związek Pszczelarzy w Ostrołęce. The association forwards detailed rules on the distribution of the labels to the inspection body. The single-label system is intended to guarantee the appropriate quality and facilitate product traceability. These rules may not in any way discriminate against producers who do not belong to the association.

#### **11. Specific requirements introduced by current regulations:**

Please indicate whether there are specific requirements imposed by European Union or national legislation concerning the agricultural product or foodstuff to be notified.

None

#### **12. Additional information:**

Please provide additional information, if any, on the agricultural product or foodstuff to be notified.

None

#### **13. List of documents attached to the application:**

Materials and publications referenced in the application:

1. Baranowski I., Najstarszy opis Puszczy Kurpiowskiej [The oldest description of the Puszcza Kurpiowska forest], *Ziemia*, vol. II, 1911.
2. Chętnik Adam, 1913, *Puszcza Kurpiowska* [The Puszcza Kurpiowska forest] – reprint of the book was published by Związek Kurpiów z Ostrołęki in 2004.
3. Chętnik A., *Życie puszczańskie Kurpiów* [The forest life of the Kurpie people], Warsaw 1971.
4. Kielak Bernard, *Zwyczaje doroczne Kurpiowskiej Puszczy Zielonej* [Annual Customs of the Kurpiowska Puszcza Zielona], Wydawnictwo Muzeum Kultury Kurpiowskiej, 2005.

5. Kielak Bernard, Żebrowski Tadeusz i, *Kalendarium Imprez Regionalnych Kurpiowszczyzny* [Calendar of regional events in Kurpie], Wydawnictwo Stowarzyszenia Rozwoju Turystyki i Rekreacji, Ostrołęka 2005.
6. *Kodeks Dobrej Praktyki Produkcyjnej w Pszczelarstwie* [Code of Good Beekeeping Production Practices] – adopted for use by Polish beekeepers through a resolution passed during the 17<sup>th</sup> General Meeting of Delegates of the Polish Beekeeping Association on 29 February 2004 in Pszczela Wola.
7. Kuczyńska Urszula, *Bartnictwo Kurpiowskiej Puszczy Zielonej* [Forest beekeeping in the Kurpiowska Puszcza Zielona], Pszczelarska Oficyna Wydawnicza, Muzeum Północno-Mazowieckie w Łomży 2004.
8. Olędzki J., *Pasiecznictwo na terenie Kurpiowskiej Puszczy Zielonej od końca XIX wieku do połowy XX wieku* [Apiculture in the Kurpiowska Puszcza Zielona from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century], [in:] *Kurpie Puszcza Zielona*, ed. A. Kutrzeba Pojnarowa, vol. II, Wrocław – Warsaw – Kraków 1964.
9. Piaścik Fr., *Osadnictwo w Puszczy Kurpiowskiej* [Settlement in the Puszcza Kurpiowska], Warsaw 1939.
10. Rafacz J., *Regale bartne na Mazowszu w późniejszym średniowieczu* [Beekeeping royal edicts in Masovia in the late Middle Ages], Lviv 1938.
11. Rundstein J., *Cztery księgi bartne nowogrodzkie z XVII i XVIII wieku* [The four Nowogród beekeeping books of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century], Warsaw 1928.
12. Żebrowski T., *Pierścień Kurpiowski* [The Kurpie Ring], Wydawnictwo Stowarzyszenia Rozwoju Turystyki i Rekreacji, Ostrołęka 2004.
13. Żukowski R., *Bartnictwo w Zagajnicy Łomżyńskiej w okresie od XVI do połowy XIX wieku* [Forest beekeeping in Zagajnica Łomżyńska in the period from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century], Białystok 1964.

### III.

#### SINGLE DOCUMENT

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin

*Miód kurpiowski*

(EC) No

PDO       PGI

**1. Name:**

Miód kurpiowski

**2. Member State or third country:**

Poland

**3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff:**

**3.1. Type of product:**

Class 1.4. – Other products of animal origin, honey

**3.2. Description of the product to which the name in (1) applies:**

**Microscopic characteristics:**

‘Miód kurpiowski’ is a nectar honey, with the possible inclusion of honeydew. It is a polyfloral honey; pollen from any one plant species must not account for more than 30% of the total, and pollen from crop plants may not exceed 10% of the total.

**Organoleptic characteristics:**

‘Miód kurpiowski’ is a liquid or crystallised nectar honey, with the possible inclusion of honeydew. Its consistency is thick, liquid and viscous. It forms medium- and fine-grained crystals, and its colour ranges from pale yellow, through straw-coloured to brown with greenish highlights. The greenish highlights indicate the proportion of honeydew in the honey. The honey has an intense aroma, with a distinctive spicy fragrance and a delicate, slightly sweet taste.

**Physico-chemical characteristics:**

Physico-chemical characteristics of ‘miód kurpiowski’:

- monosaccharide (glucose and fructose) content – not less than 60 g/100 g,
- sucrose content – not more than 5 g/100 g,
- diastase activity on the Schade scale – not less than 8,
- free acids – not more than 50 meq/kg,
- electrical conductivity – not more than 0.8 mS/cm,
- water-insoluble content – not more than 0.1 g/100 g
- water content – not more than 18.5%
- HMF (5-hydroxymethylfurfural) content – not more than 10 mg/kg.

‘Miód kurpiowski’ is produced exclusively by bees of the following races: the European dark bee (*Apis mellifera mellifera*), the Carniolan honeybee (*Apis mellifera carnica*) and the Caucasian honeybee (*Apis mellifera caucasica*) and bees resulting from the interbreeding of these races.

### **3.3. Raw materials (for processed products only):**

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### **3.4. Feed (for products of animal origin only):**

The feeding of bees is not permitted during the period in which ‘miód kurpiowski’ is harvested. The bees may be fed after the honey has been extracted, before winter, in quantities necessary to build up reserves to ensure that the colony can survive the winter. Colonies may be fed beet-sugar syrup or glucose-fructose syrups. Beet sugar and glucose-fructose syrups may originate outside the geographical area in which ‘miód kurpiowski’ is obtained. This does not affect the quality of the honey. The winter reserves must not find their way into ‘miód kurpiowski’.

### **3.5. Specific steps in production that must take place in the identified geographical area:**

All stages in the production of ‘miód kurpiowski’, from the positioning of the apiaries to the final packaging of the honey, must take place in the defined geographical area. ‘Miód kurpiowski’ is cold-spun in a honey extractor using centrifugal force. After being clarified in tanks, the honey is decanted into various kinds of retail packaging. The honey must be decanted into retail packaging before the first crystallisation takes place.

### **3.6. Specific rules concerning slicing, grating, packaging, etc.:**

The packaging of ‘miód kurpiowski’ must take place in the area identified in Section 4. This requirement was introduced to ensure that the product is of an appropriate quality and for the purposes of monitoring and checking its origin. The requirement for packaging to take place in the area is aimed at minimising the risk of ‘miód kurpiowski’ being mixed with other types of honey and of other honeys being sold under this protected name.

### **3.7. Specific rules concerning labelling:**

All beekeepers and entities engaged in the buying-in and further market preparation of honey under the protected name are required to use one type of label. Labels will be distributed through the Kurpiowsko-Mazowiecki Związek Pszczelarzy w Ostrołęce. The association forwards detailed rules on the distribution of the labels to the inspection body. The single-label system is intended to guarantee the appropriate quality and facilitate product traceability. These rules may not in any way discriminate against producers who do not belong to the association.

## **4. Concise definition of the geographical area:**

‘Miód kurpiowski’ is harvested in the area known in a historical and ethnographical context as Kurpie.

This comprises the following area of Mazowieckie Voivodeship:

- Municipalities: Chorzele, Jednorozec and Przasnysz in Przasnysz Powiat,
- Municipalities: Krasnosielc, Płoniawy-Bramura, Sypniewo, Młynarze, Różan, Rzewnie and Maków in Maków Powiat
- Municipalities: Obryte and Zatory in Pułtusk Powiat
- Municipalities: Długosiodło, Brańszczyk and Rząśnik in Wyszaków



Powiat Municipalities: Brok, Ostrów, Wąsewo and Małkinia in Ostrów Mazowiecka Powiat

Municipalities: Goworowo, Czerwin, Rzekuń, Olszewo-Borki, Lelis, Troszyn, Baranowo, Kadzidło, Czarnia, Myszyniec and Łyse in Ostrołęka Powiat.

It also comprises the following area of Podlaskie: Voivodeship:

Municipality: Turośl in Kolno Powiat

Municipalities: Nowogród and Zbójna in Łomża Powiat.

## **5. Link with the geographical area**

### **5.1. Specificity of the geographical area**

‘Miód kurpiowski’ comes from the area known as Kurpie. This area is divided into Kurpie Zielone (Green Kurpie) and Kurpie Białe (White Kurpie). Kurpie Zielone consists of the lands along the right bank of the river Narew and the area around its tributaries, the Pisa, Skwa, Omulew and Rozoga, as far as the left bank of the river Orzyc. Kurpie Białe consists of the lands between the right bank of the lower course of the river Bug and its tributaries, the Tuchełka and the Brok, and the left bank of the lower course of the river Narew and its tributaries, the Wymakracz and the Orz. Kurpie Zielone abounds in rivers and lakes, which is conducive to plant life – hence its name. Kurpie Białe is drier. Its name is derived from its podzolic (white) soils.

#### **5.1.1 Natural factors**

Kurpie is characterised by a very low level of urbanisation. There are no large or medium-sized industrial plants and there are no large-scale commercial farms. Not a single town in the Kurpie region has over 100,000 inhabitants. Thanks in part to its exceptional natural assets, the area has been classed as one of the ‘Green Lungs of Europe’. The exceptional nature of the region is also shown by the number of Natura 2000 sites: Dolina Dolnego Bugu (site code PLB 140001), Puszcza Biała (site code PLB 140007) and Dolina Omulwi i Płodownicy (site code PLB 140005). The region also includes the Nadbużański Landscape Park, and a large number of nature reserves, such as ‘Czarnia’ forest reserve, ‘Surowe’, ‘Czarny Kąt’, ‘Kaniston’, ‘Łokieć’, ‘Taborzy’, ‘Minos’, ‘Serafin’, ‘Karaska’, ‘Podgórze’, ‘Olsy Płoszycie’. The Puszcza Biała site also contains the following nature conservation areas: ‘Dąbrowa’, ‘Nagoszewo’, ‘Brzostowo’, ‘Ochudno’, ‘Czuraj’, ‘Popławy’, ‘Bartnia’, ‘Wielgolas’, ‘Stawinoga’.

As much as 29% of the area identified at 4 is covered by forest, whilst other land uses – towns, villages, roads and industry – account for only 1%. Meadow and scrubland account for 45% of the area and farmed land 35%. These habitats do not cover large areas, but form a patchwork (like a mosaic), which means that there is no dominant pollen type in ‘miód kurpiowski’. The area is characterised by poor quality soils (classes V and VI). Class IV soils occur only in the river valleys.

This area also has the lowest average atmospheric precipitation in Poland (not exceeding 500 mm per year).

#### **5.1.2 Human factors:**

The area defined at 4 is characterised by great diversity, extensive methods of land use and very low precipitation. This means that the nectar yield of nectar-bearing plants is low, and this, in turn, means that the honey has to be obtained over long periods. In the Kurpie region, it is the beekeeper, rather than the bees, that as a rule has to seek out the nectar, and he or she positions the hives in good honey-producing locations. ‘Miód kurpiowski’ has been obtained by the traditional method, from grassland and forests, continuously since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Grasslands (meadows, pastures and fallow land) are the source of the spring nectar honeys

obtained in May and June. Coniferous (spruce and pine) forests are the main source of the summer honeydew and nectar honeys obtained in July and August. Traditionally, the first harvest of honey, produced from spring nectar, takes place in the first half of June. The second harvest of honey, produced from summer nectar, which concludes the honey-collecting season, takes place in the second half of July.

The skills of the local beekeepers are reflected in the selection of sites for apiaries and, in particular, the keeping of apiaries in areas where the nectar yield is low or very low. The times of collecting and (cold) spinning honey and the method of keeping and decanting the honey are determined by centuries-old tradition. Appropriate parameters for ‘miód kurpiowski’, especially those aimed at making sure that it remains of the highest quality, are possible only if very great care is taken in the process of obtaining the honey and if beekeepers comply with the characteristic restrictions that apply to its production. The temperature of the honey must not exceed 30 °C at any stage of production. The filtering (to remove pollen), creaming or pasteurisation and artificial heating of the honey are not permitted. The use of chemicals or other bee repellents, whether in solid, liquid or gaseous form, is forbidden during the process of harvesting the honey. The production of ‘miód kurpiowski’ therefore requires beekeepers to possess great skill and a knowledge of the processes at play in the natural environment.

Another feature of beekeeping in Kurpie is the small number of beekeepers – the result of environmental conditions which make it difficult to keep hives. The number of beekeepers working in the area is estimated at no more than 400, with the total number of colonies not exceeding 8,000.

## **5.2. Specificity of the product:**

‘Miód kurpiowski’ is obtained from the nectar of a number of plant species which flower in succession. The specificity of the product is determined chiefly by two parameters:

1. pollen composition – the pollen of any one plant species must not account for more than 30% of the total, and pollen from crop plants may not exceed 10% of the total.
2. the HMF (5-hydroxymethylfurfural) content must not exceed 10 mg/kg.

## **5.3. Causal link between the geographical area and the quality or characteristics of the product (for PDO) or a specific quality, the reputation or other characteristic of the product (for PGI):**

The exceptional properties of ‘miód kurpiowski’ are due to the specific qualities described at 5.2 and its reputation. Key to the quality of the final product are the very substantial restrictions that apply to its production, e.g. the fact that a temperature of 30°C must not be exceeded at any stage of production means that all the natural enzymes, essential compounds and other constituents typical of honey are present in the final product. The above-mentioned temperature restriction and the requirement that the honey be decanted into retail packaging before the first crystallisation takes place help ensure that the HMF content does not exceed 10 mg/kg. The varied pollen composition of ‘miód kurpiowski’ (in which there is no dominant pollen type) is due to the wealth of diverse plant habitats in the Kurpie region.

The product began to earn a good reputation in Kurpie Zielone and Kurpie Białe in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Beekeeping in the region dates back to that era. There are many well-documented references to ‘miód kurpiowski’ over the years – from the royal edict on forest beekeeping (*regale bartne*) of 1401, through the forest beekeeping law of 1559, by which the conversion from customary to beekeeping law was secured, right up to the present day. Kurpie’s links with beekeeping are also reflected in a number of customs related to bees and honey.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in order to celebrate the status of ‘miód kurpiowski’ as a product inextricably linked with the local forests, the idea of holding a festival in honour of the honey was revived. The first festival after a long break was held in September 1976. It is the biggest event in the region. It is estimated that between 20,000 and 35,000 people attended the Kurpiowskie Miodobranie (Kurpie Honey Harvest) festival every year between 2002 and 2006. Another indication of the popularity of the festival is that, in the course of a single day in 2005, over 60 beekeepers displayed their wares and approximately 12 tonnes of honey was sold. Both the time and the venue of the festivities keep up Kurpie traditions that go back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Kurpie’s rich beekeeping traditions and the reputation of ‘miód kurpiowski’ also feature in a great number of publications, for instance *Zwyczajy Doroczne Kurpiowskiej Puszczy Zielonej*, 2005, by Bernard Kielak, and *Bartnictwo Kurpiowskiej Puszczy Zielonej*, published in Łomża in 2004.

The product’s reputation can also be gauged from numerous articles and documents indicating that it has become part of the culture and identity of the people who live here. Information on the product and related events is published in the national, regional and local press, e.g. an article entitled ‘Miód folklor i konfitura’ [Honey, folklore and jam], which appeared in *Gazeta Współczesna* in 2004, and an article entitled ‘Jak to na Kurpiach miód w puszczy podbierają’ [How honey is harvested in the Kurpie forests], which appeared in the *Zielony Sztandar* weekly.

The honey’s reputation is confirmed by TV films and documentaries about ‘miód kurpiowski’, such as *Puszcza Zielona* (TVP 1) in 1985, *Bursztyn i Miód w tradycji kurpiowskiej* [Amber and honey in Kurpie tradition] (TVP 1) in 1997, and *Kurpiowskie Miodobranie* [Kurpie Honey Harvest] (TVP 3), which was broadcast in 2002.

The reputation of ‘miód kurpiowski’ and its role in the region are also evidenced by the fact that the Polish Tourist Organisation in 2004 awarded its Best Tourism Product prize to the Miodobranie Kurpiowskie. ‘Miód kurpiowski’ was also awarded a Perła 2007 prize in the ‘Nasze Kulinarne Dziedzictwo’ (Our Culinary Heritage) competition.

Kurpie is proud of the quality of the honey produced there. The reputation now enjoyed by ‘miód kurpiowski’ could not have been earned without the climatic conditions that prevail in the area. They contribute to the unique properties of ‘miód kurpiowski’ and to its quality and reputation.

#### **REFERENCE TO PUBLICATION OF THE SPECIFICATION**

(Article 5(7) of the Regulation (EC) No 510/2006)

<http://www.bip.minrol.gov.pl/strona/DesktopDefault.aspx?TabOrgId=1620&LangId=0>