APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION OF THE DESIGNATION OF ORIGIN / ~~GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION~~ FOR AN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCT OR FOODSTUFF

I. Applicant

1. Name:

District Beekeepers' Circle (Terenowe Koło Pszczelarzy) in Sejny and District Beekeepers' Society in Lazdijai – Lazdijų rajono bitininkų draugija (Lithuania)

2. Seat or residence and address:

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Lazdijų rajono bitininkų draugija
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4. Person acting on behalf of the applicant:

Łukasz Sowulewski (Poland)
Juozas Petrauskas (Lithuania)

5. The Group:

The group consists of beekeepers affiliated with the District Beekeepers' Circle (Terenowe Koło Pszczelarzy) in Sejny and the District Beekeepers' Society in Lazdijai.

II. Specification1.

Name:

‘miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny’

2. Application for registration of:

1)	designation of origin	X
2)	geographical indication	

3. Category:

Class 1.4. – Other products of animal origin, honey

4. Description:

1. Only bees’ honey from polyfloral nectar may be sold under the name ‘miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny.’ At the time of sale, the honey may be in liquid form (strained honey) or crystallised form (set honey). The honey may have a thick translucent liquid consistency or a crystallised consistency. It is obtained from several dozen melliferous plant species characteristic of this area, including various species of willow and maple, common dandelion, raspberry, buckthorn, white and red clover, bird’s-foot trefoil, melilot and other papilionaceous plants (*Papilionaceae*), viper’s bugloss, lungwort, lime, weeds of the *Cruciferae* family (*Brassicaceae*), cornflower, willow herb, false acacia, foxtail lily, plum and plants of the *Umbelliferae*, *Caryophyllaceae* and *Labiatae* families.

2. Pollen of monoculture crops may be present in the honey only in trace quantities (not exceeding 5% in total). In no case may the presence of such pollen lead to changes in the honey’s characteristic taste, smell or colour. The honey has a very characteristic colour, ranging from dark yellow to dark golden. A characteristic feature of the honey is its slight cloudiness. The colour of the honey is allowed to be somewhat darker; this is caused by the inclusion of honeydew, which sometimes occurs during the period of nectar production in some plants. The maximum amount of honeydew that may be included, measured in terms of electrical conductivity, is 0.5 mS/cm.

3. Pollen of plants which are not characteristic of the region, in particular pollen of monoculture crops (i.e. rapeseed, buckwheat, serradella, sunflower, red clover and phacelia) may be present in the honey only in trace quantities (not exceeding 5% in total). In no case may the presence of such pollen lead to changes in the honey’s characteristic taste, smell or colour.

4. The diversity of plants, particularly wild varieties, offers a rich forage base for bees. The high proportion of papilionaceous plants lends honeys from this area a distinctive bitter taste (attributed to the presence of alkaloids and glycosides), along with a robust aroma resulting from compounds like coumarin. The honey has a very characteristic colour, ranging from dark yellow to dark golden. A characteristic feature of the honey is its slight

cloudiness. The colour of the honey is allowed to be somewhat darker; this is caused by the inclusion of honeydew, which sometimes occurs during the period of nectar production in some plants.

5. The physico-chemical characteristics of 'miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny' comply with the commercial quality requirements generally in force both in Poland and Lithuania and throughout the European Union.

Physico-chemical characteristics:

- water content — not more than 18%,
- density — over 1,400 g/cm^3,
- proline content — not less than 25 mg/100 g of honey,
- 5-hydroxymethylfurfural (HMF) content — not more than 2.0 mg/100 g of honey,- pH (3.8-4.8),
- 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.

5. Geographical area:

'Miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny' is collected in the following area:

in Poland:

- four municipalities in Sejny county (Sejny, Giby, Krasnopol and Puńsk),
- five municipalities in Suwałki county (Suwałki, Szypliszki, Jeleniewo, Rutka-Tartak and Wiżajny), **in Lithuania:**
- twelve civil parishes in the Lazdijai District municipality (Kapčiamiestis, Veisejai, Kučiūnai, Lazdijai, Seirijai, Noragėliai, Šventežeris, Teizai, Šlavantai, Būdvietis, Šeštokai and Krosna).

6. Proof of origin:

Provide information on the procedure adopted to confirm that the agricultural product or foodstuff originates from the defined geographical area.

1) The entire production process is monitored by a special control system, which allows for end-to-end tracking of the production processes. The designation 'miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny' may only be applied to products that fully satisfy each of the following conditions:

a) they are produced in the specified geographical area outlined in Section 5, following the production method described in Section 7, and possess the characteristics specified in the product description in Section 4;

b) their producers have agreed in writing to comply with the specifications, and

c) their producers have provided the following information to the District Beekeepers' Circle (Terenowe Koło Pszczelarzy) in Sejny (for beekeepers gathering honey in Poland) or to the District Beekeepers' Society in Lazdijai (for beekeepers gathering honey in Lithuania), respectively.

2) Any producer wishing to produce the PDO product is obliged to submit a declaration to the District Beekeepers' Circle (Terenowe Koło Pszczelarzy) in Sejny or the District Beekeepers' Society in Lazdijai. These declarations must include:
   a) first name and surname of the beekeeper,
   b) location of the apiary /address/,
   c) the number of bee colonies,
   d) information on the sanitary status of bee colonies,
   e) information on the number of bee colonies dedicated to collecting honey commercialised under the PDO,
   f) a statement by the beekeeper that they undertake to comply with the specification,
   g) a certificate of completion of a qualification course in the beekeeping profession (as a 'qualified worker' or 'master' or basic beekeeping course),
   h) information on the required documents referred to in Section 3 'Production methods' – all the necessary authorisations needed to produce the honey.

3) The information in the register should be updated once a year, no later than 30 April.

4) Beekeepers who are not registered but wish to produce the PDO product in question should submit the declaration no later than 30 April of the relevant year.

5) The District Beekeepers' Circle (Terenowe Koło Pszczelarzy) in Sejny and the District Beekeepers' Society in Lazdijai carry out an annual internal control independent of the control carried out by the bodies referred to in Section 9 of the specification. This control includes organoleptic and incomplete laboratory analysis of honey samples from selected apiaries. A detailed report is drafted after the inspection, documenting the observations. This report is accessible for review by the bodies mentioned in Section 9 of the specification.

6) Both the District Beekeepers' Circle (Terenowe Koło Pszczelarzy) in Sejny and the District Beekeepers' Society in Lazdijai should maintain an updated list of beekeepers interested in producing the PDO honey for the relevant year, as well as a list of entities interested in subsequent market preparation. These lists may only include beekeepers who have submitted a declaration in good time and whose apiaries are located in the area defined in Section 5. Annually, by 15 May, these lists are submitted to the competent authority specified in Section 9 of the specification.

7) Any entity intending to engage in the buying-in of the honey and its subsequent presentation under the protected designation should notify the District Beekeepers' Circle in Sejny and the District Beekeepers' Society in Lazdijai. Such entities must be located in the area defined in Section 5. The notification should include the name of the owner/company, the nature of the business, the location, the characteristics of

the facility, the packaging system and capacity, and information on the operation of the business in accordance with the relevant regulations.

8) The District Beekeepers' Circle in Sejny or the District Beekeepers' Society in Lazdijai, as appropriate, maintain a list of entities interested in the buying-in of honey from beekeepers and and its subsequent market preparation under the protected designation. Entities that are not registered but wish to engage in the buying-in and presenting the PDO product in a given year should submit the notification no later than 30 April of that year. The list is submitted to the competent authority specified in Section 9 of the specification.

9) Entities that will collect honey from beekeepers and subsequently present it under the protected designation should have an internal system to accurately determine the quantities of honey purchased and sold under the protected designation. The internal system is designed to eliminate the possibility of mixing the PDO honey with other honeys. The precise regulations governing the operation of this system must be communicated to the control body.

10) Beekeepers should always maintain up-to-date documentation, including:
    a) confirmation of the proper sanitary condition of the apiaries,
    b) information on the location where the 'miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny' was collected from, if the apiary has been transported,
    c) a record of the total amount of honey produced and sold on the farm in a given year, indicating the quantity of honey covered by the protected designation of origin,
    d) results of inspections individually conducted by the beekeepers.

11) If the control body identifies non-compliance at any stage in the production chain, the product may not be marketed using the protected designation of origin.

All producers are required to comply with the conditions set out in Chapter 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.

7. Production method:

1. The apiary must be located within the area defined in Section 5. The final choice of location is up to the beekeeper.

2. Only breeds and inter-breed crosses of the honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) of the subspecies listed below may be used to produce 'miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny':
    - ③ European dark bee *(Apis mellifera mellifera)*,
    - ③ Carniolan honey bee *(Apis mellifera carnica)*,

③ Caucasian honey bee *(Apis mellifera caucasica).*

3. The beekeeper must comply with all production requirements set out in separate legislation, in particular veterinary and sanitary regulations. The beekeeper must have all the necessary authorisations for honey production, particularly documents certifying the health status of the bees and suitably fitted premises and equipment.

4. On account of the very short growing season of plants in this area, 'miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny' is produced solely during a three-month period, i.e. from mid-May to mid-August. Outside this period, it will only be possible to collect honey in the event of unexpected climatic changes in a given year that would lead to a shift in the growing season of plants. The District Beekeepers' Circle in Sejny and the District Beekeepers' Society in Lazdijai must notify the competent control bodies referred to in Section 9 of the specification about the postponement of the honey collecting period.

5. The production of honey must take place in hives made of materials whose primary constituent is wood. The use of extensions (honey stores) is permitted.

6. The bees may be fed after the honey has been spun before winter in accordance with the Code of Good Beekeeping Practices in Poland and Lithuania, observing the provisions of the Regulation No 3240 of the Minister of Agriculture of Lithuania of 29 June 2006. The bees must not be given supplemental feed during the period in which 'miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny' is collected. 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. The beekeeper must inform the District Beekeepers' Circle in Sejny or the District Beekeepers' Society in Lazdijai, as appropriate.

7. Apiaries where 'miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny' is collected may not be located closer than 2,000 meters to the monoculture crops referred to in Section 3 of the product specification, which are larger than 0.5 hectares. Irrespective of whether this condition is met, honey sold under the designation 'miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny' must comply with the requirements outlined in Section 4 of the product specification.

8. The honey is cold-spun in a honey extractor using centrifugal force. It is then strained through a double sieve in order to separate any remaining wax residue or other impurities.

9. Strained honey is put up in (decanted into) unit packages, primarily glass or stoneware vessels with a capacity not exceeding 1,400 g. Any other packaging materials used must be suitable for food storage. Bottling of the honey must take place within the designated area outlined in Section 5 of the application.

10. To maintain the specific properties of the honey, it should be stored under appropriate conditions, including:
    a) in dark, clean, dry, and well-ventilated premises,
    b) free from extraneous odours and protected against insects and rodents,
    c) at temperature maintained between 4 to 18^{o}C,
    d) in vessels designed for food storage, tightly sealed, and placed on pallets, counters, shelves, etc. Storage of containers with honey directly on the floor is not permitted. Storing the honey in such a way as to adversely affect its biological properties or alter its taste or odour is also not permitted.

11. 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 be permitted to rise above 42°C during any of the steps in production.

12. During the period in which the honey is produced, it is forbidden to administer medicines to the bees. The use of chemicals or other bee deterrents, whether in solid, liquid or gaseous form, is also forbidden. Treatment for *Varroa* infestation is permissible after the honey collection period. Only methods and medicines authorised by the European Union may be used, and if necessary, only under veterinary supervision.

13. Honey cannot be marketed under the designation ‘miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny’ if there are visible defects, such as phase separation, fermentation, or a noticeable change in taste or odour.

14. When collecting honey, in situations not addressed or specified in the specification, beekeepers from Sejneńszczyzna are required to 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 17th General Meeting of Delegates of the Polish Beekeeping Association on 29 February 2004, in Pszczela Wola. Similarly, beekeepers in the Lazdijai district must comply with the regulations outlined in Regulation No 3240 of the Minister of Agriculture of Lithuania of 29 June 2006, for matters not covered or specified in the specification.

Packaging of honey in the area

The beekeepers themselves decant the honey into individual retail packaging (having a capacity of not more than 1,400 g). In this way, they 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 if it has not been properly packaged.

If the honey could be transported outside the area in packaging other than retail packages, there is also a risk that ‘miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny’ could be mixed with other types of honey or that honey not originating in the geographical area defined in Section 4 could be placed on the market under the protected designation.

This restriction is designed to eliminate any factor that might compromise the quality of ‘miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny’ and to maintain the high level of credibility of the control system.

8. Link with the geographical area:

Human factor

The history of beekeeping in the area now known as Ziemia Sejneńska (Sejneńszczyzna) and Ziemia Łoździejska (Lazdijų kraštas) traces back to the time of the Yotvingian tribes (also known as the Sudov tribes). These tribes engaged in wild-beekeeping, an early form of beekeeping. However, their population was significantly reduced during the expansion of the Teutonic Order into pagan lands in the 13th century,

leading to the depopulation of the area and the growth of forests and wilderness. Despite this depopulation, wild-beekeeping persisted as the local population continued to use the resources of the forest. People living in settlements within the forest and wilderness were actively involved in wild-beekeeping. The establishment of new settlements in these areas gained momentum towards the end of the Middle Ages. In the 15th century, the territory experienced increased settlement activity. Inhabitants were clearing forests to make way for villages and estates – manors and farms.

The forested landscape provided ideal conditions for bees, which inhabited wild beehives and tree hollows (forest beehives). In the pursuit of honey, people engaged in what could be described as a form of ‘robbery economy,’ often taking all the honey without leaving sufficient winter supplies for the bees. Consequently, many bee colonies perished during the winter, and the bee population replenished itself primarily through natural swarming. Over time, a more organised approach to bee management emerged, which involved leaving some honeycombs for the bees to sustain themselves, while harvesting others. The light combs were removed, while the dark ones were retained. This practice led to improved bee survival rates during the colder months and laid the foundation for the emergence of the profession of beekeeper. Beekeepers marked their wild beehives with distinctive signs and maintained specific territories for beekeeping, as documented in court records.

Beekeeping became an integral part of the local economy, with laws governing beekeeping officially recognised, such as in the Statute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in 1529. Penalties for offences related to beekeeping were severe, including the death penalty by hanging for stealing or destroying beehives and bees.

In the 14th and 15th centuries, the Dukes of Lithuania granted rights to use the wilderness resources in this area, including the right to use meadows (*sianożętne wchody*) and the right to use forest beehives (*bartne wchody*). In the mid-16th century, the Dukes’ subjects held rights to the use of forest beehives in various locations, including part of the forest at the

embankment on Lake Serwy, in the Sejny area, and along the Dowspuda settlement in the Dowspuda Forest, all situated within the area in question.

The owners of *wchody* (rights) had the right to build only *łania* and *hrydnia*, that is, a spacious room for communal living, in their tree hives. Building a manor house was not allowed. Beekeepers would erect sheds in the forest, which often led to the formation of villages. Access to the forest was regulated; individuals were allowed to stay only at specific times and needed a permit issued by the forest authority, but without firearms or dogs. During winter or summer, depending on the right granted, as well as during certain periods, such as from St. Bartholomew's Day (24 August) to St. Michael's Day (29 September), forest access was restricted. The number of forest beehives and beekeepers allowed in the forest was strictly controlled. Each beekeeper had a unique bee-mark, or *klejma*, which they used to mark their forest beehives or the trees where they planned to establish beehives. In this area, the beekeepers gave honey levies from their forest beehives to the royal official (*klucznik*), who also adjudicated disputes over beehives.

From the 17th century onwards, forest beekeeping began to decline. The reason for this decline was the intensive felling of large trees, often with beehives, which meant that only some of the hives were taken to the beekeepers' homesteads in the form of wooden logs. Beekeeping lasted the longest in the forest areas of southern Lithuania, specifically in the Lazdijai area and the Ziemia Sejeńska (Sejeńszczyzna). Gradually, forest beekeeping disappeared, and only domestic apiaries with logs remained.

Beekeeping declined further during the period of the Partitions of Poland. In 1827, the government ordered the removal of forest beehives from the Augustów forests, citing reasons such as the destruction of valuable tree trunks, the difficulty of forest surveillance, and the facilitation of theft. Under the guise of working at the beehives, wood was stolen, and there were instances of poaching. A ban on entering the forest was also finally introduced during the partition period.

In the 1830s, the total number of trunks in the Augustów Governorate was 12,950 in 1808, 15,391 in 1835, and 20,895 in 1842. However, a decrease in the number of trunks was soon observed. While there were 4,159 trunks in the Augustów Poviat, which also included the Suwałki Poviat, between 1815 and 1839, there were only 1,831 in 1842. Similarly, the present Sejny Poviat had 6,070 trunks, which decreased to 3,176. The decline of forest beekeeping and the shift to backyard apiaries were the main reasons for this decrease. At the same time, the decline of forest beekeeping forced changes in beekeeping practices. Over time, due to the lack of good log-building material, hives began to be made from straw. Straw hives were easy to make, warm in winter, and did not overheat in summer.

The second half of the 19th century saw a further decline in beekeeping. The social activist and beekeeper Z. Sturgólewski from Augustów described the beehives used at that time in the Suwałki region in his 1879 book *Pszczelarz i Ogrodnik* [Beekeeper and Gardener]: *'These were logs with thin walls and extremely thin interiors, unsuitable for good wintering and proper management in spring and summer. Apiaries of 1-5 logs predominated, and there were only a few apiaries of over 40 logs in the Sejny and Augustów poviats.'*

At the end of the 19th century, beekeepers in the area began to organise themselves to defend common interests and exchange beekeeping experiences. The Circle of Beekeepers in Sejny, the first such organisation in the Kingdom of Poland, was established in 1873, and in 2007 it celebrated its 134th anniversary.

At the end of the 19th century, beekeeping with frame hives began to gain popularity. In the south of Lithuania, Kazimierz Lewicki's beehives and Warsaw beehives (ordinary, modernised Lewicki beehives) were the most widespread. Today, log hives and straw beehives can only be seen in museums, open-air museums, or as decorative elements beautifying modern apiaries.

Unfortunately, World War II had a devastating impact on beekeeping in the region, with more than 70% of beehives in the Sejny and Suwałki poviats perishing. The importance of beekeeping to the area is evidenced not only by the inventories of beehives that were taken, but also by the detailed classification of the types of beehives used. This variety reflects the level of development within the local beekeeping industry. In 1948, there were 2,342 bee hives in the Suwałki Poviat, which included the area of the present Sejny Poviat. Among these were 2,203 regular Warsaw and Lewicki beehives, 30 extended Warsaw beehives, 13 Dadant hives, 50 other removable hives, and 46 non-removable hives. Beekeeping was primarily carried out by farmers whose main occupation remained crop farming.

Currently, beekeepers from the Lazdijai District and Sejeńszczyzna mostly produce honey in Dadant, regular Warsaw, and extended Warsaw beehives. Dadant hives, which are made of wood, have two extensions (honey stores) each. Multi-body beehives are almost never used.

For those interested in the history and traditions of beekeeping in Sejeńszczyzna, the publication *Pszczelarstwo na Sejneńszczyźnie* [Beekeeping in Sejeńszczyzna] by Józef Sowulewski, published by the District Beekeepers' Circle in Sejny in 2004, is highly recommended. This publication includes detailed information on the celebrations of the 100th, 120th, and 125th anniversaries of the establishment of the Circle. The publication also includes biographies of the presidents of the Beekeepers' Circle, as well as comprehensive information on all activities connected with beekeeping in the area. This includes details on courses held, the creation of a young beekeepers' circle, and the development of the 'Miód z Ziemi Sejneńskiej' label. Additionally, it highlights the cooperation between beekeepers from Sejeńszczyzna and those from Lazdijai in Lithuania.

Beekeeping in the Sejneńszczyzna and Łoździej District is characterised by high fragmentation (with about 200 beekeepers on the Polish side and approximately 140 on the Lithuanian side). These beekeepers predominantly produce honey in an artisanal and traditional way. The link between 'miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny' and the identity and culture of the region is evident in the way beekeepers often use the geographical indication on honey packaging. This indicates that the honey they sell is of the highest quality because it originates from Sejneńszczyzna or the Lazdijai District (Łoździejszczyzna).

The honey collected here is also very often used in various dishes of the local cuisine. It is used to make baked goods, gingerbread, mead, and even Christmas Eve *kutia*.

The high level of skill of the local beekeepers is particularly due to the preservation of traditional apiary management, which is closely linked to the characteristics of the area. The beekeepers' skills relate in particular to rules on the siting of apiaries, the breeding of bees and traditional bee-farming, consisting, amongst other things, of the use of wooden beehives; compliance with the restrictions on the supplemental feeding of bees during the winter period and the prohibition of the filtering of pollen and the creaming, pasteurising and artificial warming of honey; the cold-spinning of the honey and compliance with the restrictions on the decanting and storage of honey.

Natural link

The area in which 'miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny' is produced is situated in the Niemen river basin on the border between Poland and Lithuania, in the Eastern Suwałki Lake District (Pojezierze Wschodniosuwalskie) mesoregion. The area of what was once a single territory inhabited by the Yotvingian tribes is now situated within an area called Ziemia Sejneńska (Sejneńszczyzna) and Lazdijų kraštas. The term 'miód z Sejneńszczyzny' relates to the honey produced in Poland and the term 'miód z Łoździejszczyzny' to the honey produced in Lithuania. However, this area constitutes a homogeneous territory within which the same methods are used to obtain an identical product. 'Miód z Sejneńszczyzny' and 'miód z Łoździejszczyzny' refer to the same honey, which is why one joint application was prepared.

This area's relief was shaped as a result of many phases of glaciation. The characteristic elements of this area are lakes, deep glacial channels created under the ice (now occupied by lakes or rivers) and post-glacial hollows — small depressions with no outlet, sometimes filled with water, which were mainly created when lumps of stationary ice melted. There are around 150 lakes in Lazdijai District municipality, and several dozen lakes in Ziemia Sejneńska, the biggest of which is Lake Gaładuś, part of which is in Lithuania.

The entire area is covered by rock material deposited by the Scandinavian glacier. This glacier overlapped the area four times, bringing with it massive quantities of rock rubble and boulders. As a result, the surface relief of the area is varied. The landscape is hilly (post-glacial hills usually ranging between 140 and 190 metres above sea level), with numerous hills and depressions. The highest point in the region is Mount Viltrakio near Vingrėnai in Lithuania, which rises to 202 metres above sea level.

The climate of the area is characterized by very cold winters and warm summers. In the Lazdijai District, especially in the areas of Kapčiamiestis, Veisejai, winters are colder than the national average, and summer temperatures are higher. Temperatures in summer can reach up to +35°C. Ziemia Sejeńska (Sejeńszczyzna) is situated in a region known for its very cold winters, often referred to as the 'Polish cold pole.' The average annual temperature there is 6,1°C. Throughout the area described precipitation averages between 550 mm and 600 mm per year. The growing season for plants begins between one week and two weeks later than in the surrounding regions and is of very short duration, being less than 150 days.

The described area is hardly urbanised. maintaining a largely preserved natural rural landscape — one of the last of its kind in Europe. This high level of biodiversity supports the sustainability of local ecosystems. Extensive farming practices and the absence of

industrial activities contribute to a clean environment, ensuring that bee products like honey, pollen, propolis, and bee venom are free from pollution by harmful substances. Numerous protected areas exist within Sejeńszczyzna and the Lazdijai District, with Sejeńszczyzna situated within the so called 'Green Lungs of Poland.' The area in question has a severe climate with very pronounced continental features.

The vegetation, which imparts the honey its specific character, results from the interplay of climate, geological substrate, water relations, and anthropological changes. The relief, the air temperatures in winter and summer, the moderate level of precipitation, the very short growing season and the clean environment are key factors in determining the vegetation. To survive, the species found in the area must be well adapted to the local conditions.

The continental climate of Sejeńszczyzna and the Lazdijai region supports the persistence of relict, boreal, and arctic plant species. These include species such as: downy willow (*Salix lapponum*), shrubby birch (*Betula humilis*), cloudberry (*Rubus chamaemorus*), marsh rosemary (*Ledum palustre*), grass (*Glyceria lithuanica*), and alpine bulrush (*Baeothryon alpinum*). Species with boreal and subboreal characteristics include: dwarf birch (*Betula nana*), downy birch (*Betula pubescens*), warted birch (*Betula pendula*), Norway spruce (*Picea excelsa*), Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), common juniper (Juniperus communis), marsh violet (*Viola palustris*), bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*), lupine clover (*Trifolium lupinosa*), *Silene chlorantha*, *Silene lithuanica*, The occurrence of these plants is very characteristic of the area and is one of the features that distinguish it from adjacent areas.

A significant, as much as a fifth of the area's species composition (about 250 species) is occupied by Central European flora, such as pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*), sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*), black alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), small-leaved linden (*Tilia cordata*), Norway maple (*Acer patanoides*), common hazel (*Corylus avellana*), wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), lily of the valley (*Convallaria majalis*), and a number of meadow plants.

The plant cover also includes a Pontic element, typical of steppe areas, e.g. sand sainfoin (*Onobrychis arenaria*), snowdrop anemone (*Anemone sylvestris*), Siberian bellflower (*Campanula sibirica*).

The flora of the area in question creates the following ecotypes: field/meadow, forest, swamp/peatbog (to a considerable extent preserved in a state very close to the original), and aquatic (not a bee forage base). The field and meadow ecotype is an important and rich component of the vegetation landscape and serves as a crucial forage base for bees. It includes synanthropic (man-made) communities, of which orchard plants such as apple (*Malus domestica*), plum (*Prunus*), cherry (*Cerasus vulgaris*), cherry (*Cerasus avium*), pear (*Pirus communis*), redcurrant (*Ribes vulgare*) and some weeds of cereal and root crops such as: cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*), wild radish (*Raphanus raphanistrum*), field mustard (*Sinapis arvensis*), field thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), field clover (Trifolium arvense), rabbitfoot clover (*Trifolium strepens*), tufted vetch (*Vicia cracca*), hairy vetch (*Vicia hirsuta*), lady's thumb (*Polygonum persicaria*).

In the meadows, depending on the habitat type, the characteristic composition of plant communities varies, where, in addition to many grasses (*Gramineae*) and sedges (*Carex*), there are a number of melliferous and pollen-producing plants such as: meadow bistort (*Polygonum bistorta*), yellow pea (*Lathyrus prathensis*), water avens (*Geum rivale*), big trefoil (*Lotus uliginosus*), marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*), Siberian hogweed (*Heracleum sibiricum*), cabbage thistle (*Cirsium oleraceum*), marsh spurge (*Euphorbia palustris*), cuckoo flower (*Cardamine pratensis*), white clover (*Trifolium albus*), red clover (*T. pratense*), alsike clover (*T. hybridum*), common bird's-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), wild thyme (*Thymus serphyllum*), brown knapweed (*Centaurea jacea*) and other.

The forest ecotype represents ecosystems typical of lowland forests and woodlands, featuring a high proportion of groves, scrub, and bushy areas. These areas are diversified by species according to habitat, providing bees with nectar and pollen (rarely honeydew) from spring to autumn. Among the tree species present, the following are of important melliferous importance: Norway maple (*Acer patanoides*), sycamore maple (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata*), large-leaved lime (*Tilia platyphyllos*), rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), black locust (*Robinia pseudoacaccia*), white willow (*Salix alba*), fragile willow (*Salix fragilis*), and goat willow (Salix caprea).

Among the shrubs and bushes, most species are willows, including bay willow (*Salix pentandra*), eared willow (*S. aurita*) and grey willow (*S. cinerea*), several species of raspberry (*Rubus idaeus*), rose (*Rosa*), common hawthorn (*Carataegus monogyna*), blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), European buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*), alder buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*), marsh Labrador tea (*Ledum palustre*), common heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), mezereum (*Daphane mezereum*), bog bilberry (*Vaccinium uliginosum*) and perennials: flat pea (*Lathyrus sylvestris*), fireweed (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*), strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*), bog cranberry (*Oxycoccus quadripetalus*) and other.

Unused patches of land (roadside strips, field margin, set-aside land, debris pits, and household areas) are overgrown with many valuable melliferous plants. These areas significantly increase the biodiversity of the region's flora. These plants include viper's bugloss (*Echium vulgare*), dyer's broom (*Anchusa officinalis*), sheep's-bit (*Jasione montana*), coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*), yellow lucerne (*Medicago falcata*), common bird's-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), white melilot (Melilothus albus) and yellow meliot (*M. luteus*), motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*), musk thistle (*Carduus nutans*) and Irish moss (*C. crispus*), houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*) and *Capsicum lanceolatum*, white nettle (*Lamium album*) and red dead-nettle (*L. purpureum*), white swallow-wort (*Vincetoxicum officinale*), viper's bugloss (*Echium vulgare*).

An important fact is that in all the natural as well as anthropogenic plant communities discussed, there are many types of legumes: clover (*Trifolium*), melilot (*Melilotus*), vetches (*Vicia*), medick (*Medicago*), peavines (*Lathyrus*), trefoils (*Lotus*). The nectar from these legumes contains a number of alkaloids, glycosides, and essential oils, contributing to the strong aroma and bitter (sometimes pungent) aftertaste of the multifloral honey from this region.

‘Miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny’ may contain pollen grains from the aforementioned plant species in varying proportions, depending on the location of the hives in the area and the period of nectar and pollen collection by the bees. However, the proportion of pollen from any one plant species in the honey must not exceed 45%, while the proportion from lime (*Tilia*) must not exceed 20% of the total, as such honeys would then have to be regarded as varietal honeys. The proportion of pollen from monoculture crops is specified in Section 4(3) of this specification.

In addition to pollen grains from entomophilous and anemophilous plants, the honey contains spores and mycelium of yeast-like fungi of the genus *Saccharomyces*. In honey with honeydew, there are also ascomycetes (*Ascomycetes*) and yeast fungi of the genus *Torula*. These parameters can be determined by microscopic imaging of the honey sample.

Summary
‘Miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny’ is a unique product, closely linked to its area of origin. The honey owes its characteristic strong aroma and bitterish aftertaste to the diversity of nectariferous plants specific to the area defined in Section 4.
The specificity of the geographical area also contributes to the fact that the maximum proportion of pollen from monoculture crops in this honey is only 5%.
The specific skills of the local beekeepers are also of great importance for the quality of ‘miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny.’ These beekeepers have adapted their techniques to the challenging climatic conditions, as honey can only be harvested during the very short growing season – during a three-month period, from mid-May to mid-August. The expertise of the beekeepers, combined with the uniqueness of the region, results in honey characterised by low water content, high density, low 5-hydroxymethylfurfural content, and a stable pH.
Another distinguishing feature of ‘miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny’ is its high proline content, which is attributed to its natural origin, environmental factors, and sometimes the addition of honeydew.

9. Control body:

Name of the competent body or organisational unit: Address:	**COBICO Sp. z o.o.,**
	ul. Grzegórzecka 77, 31-559 Kraków
Telephone number:	**+48 12 630 90 90**
Fax number:	**+48 12 416 36 46**

Control body in Lithuania:

Name of the competent body or organisational unit:	**State Food and Veterinary Inspectorate** **Valstybienė maisto ir veterinarijos tarnyba**
Address:	**Siesikų g. 19, LT-2010 Vilnius, Lietuva**
Telephone number:	**+370 52404361**
Fax number:	**+370 52404362**

10. Labelling:

Provide, if any, specific labelling rules for the agricultural product or foodstuff in question.

All beekeepers and entities engaged in the buying-in of the honey and its subsequent market preparation under the protected designation in Poland and Lithuania are required to use one type of label. Inscriptions appear on the label in the relevant official language.

Every label must include the name ‘miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny’ and information on the capacity of the container, amongst other things, as well as indicating the producer’s address, the veterinary registration number, the date on which the honey was decanted and its shelf-life. Labels will also include the EU PDO symbol or the EU symbol and the inscription ‘Protected Designation of Origin.’
Labels in Poland will be distributed by the District Beekeepers’ Circle (Terenowe Koło Pszczelarzy) in Sejny, and in Lithuania by the District Beekeepers’ Society in Lazdijai. The association in question forwards detailed rules to the competent inspection body concerning the distribution of the labels. Such rules must not in any way discriminate against producers who produce ‘miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny’ in accordance with the specification but 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:

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

None

13. List of documents attached to the application:

Please provide a list of materials and publications referenced in the application and a list of accompanying annexes.

Materials and publications referenced in the application:

1. Józef Lukasz Sowuleski, *Pszczelarstwo na Sejneńszczyźnie* [Beekeeping in Sejeńszczyzna], TKP Sejny 2004.
2. Janusz Kopciał et al, *Województwo suwalskie: przeszłość, teraźniejszość, perspektywy* [Suwałki Voivodeship: past, present, prospects], Hańcza publishing house, Suwałki, 1995.
3. Mieczyslaw Lipinski, *Pożytki pszczele* [Bees' fodder plants], PWRiL, Warsaw 1982.
4. F.A. Novák, *Wielki atlas roślin* [Great atlas of plants], PWRiL, Warsaw 1975.
5. Zbigniew Kołtowski, *Wielki atlas roślin miododajnych* [Great atlas of melliferous plant species], Przedsiębiorstwo Wydawnicze Rzeczypospolita S.A., Warsaw 2006.
6. *Kodeks Dobrej Praktyki Produkcyjnej w Pszczelarstwie* [Code of Good Production Practice in Beekeeping], Polish Beekeeping Association, Warsaw 2005.

The application is accompanied by a map of the area where 'miód z Sejneńszczyzny/Łoździejszczyzny' can be produced.