

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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H.B. 519
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Water, Agriculture and Rural Affairs
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

All honey producers that extract and bottle their own honey harvest are required to be licensed with the Department of State Health Services (DSHS). In 2015, legislation allowed producers with certain restrictions to be exempted. However in 2020, DSHS adopted Food and Drug Administration (FDA) guidelines that considered the extraction and bottling of honey as a raw agricultural commodity, leading to a misalignment between federal standards and state law. This stringent language adversely affected smaller enterprises.

H.B. 519 will reconcile conflicting statutes and definitions by reclassifying honey production operations. Under the new legislation, a beekeeper is one that produces and sells or distributes honey or honeycomb, given that the product is raw, unblended, and adulterated. Other provisions to H.B. 519 are removing the labeling requirement, making conforming changes throughout the law, and including that an operation that extracted honey from honeycomb would be harvesting a "raw agricultural commodity," which is any food in its raw or natural state.

H.B. 519 amends current law relating to honey production operations and the harvesting and packaging of honey and honeycomb.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 437.001(7), Health and Safety Code, to define "honey production operation" and to delete existing text defining "small honey production operation."

SECTION 2. Amends Sections 437.0197, 437.0198, and 437.0199, Health and Safety Code, as follows:

Sec. 437.0197. New heading: EXEMPTION FOR HONEY PRODUCTION OPERATION. Provides that a honey production operation, rather than a small honey production operation, is not a food service establishment for purposes of Chapter 437 (Regulation of Food Service Establishments, Retail Food Stores, Mobile Food Units, and Roadside Food Vendors).

Sec. 437.0198. New heading: REGULATION OF HONEY PRODUCTION PROHIBITED. Makes a conforming change to this section.

Sec. 437.0199. New heading: LABELING REQUIREMENTS FOR HONEY PRODUCTION OPERATION. Deletes existing text requiring that the label for honey or honeycomb sold or distributed by a honey production operation include certain components. Makes a conforming change.

SECTION 3. Amends Chapter 437, Health and Safety Code, by adding Section 437.01991, as follows:

Sec. 437.01991. HONEY AS RAW AGRICULTURAL COMMODITY. (a) Defines "raw agricultural commodity."

(b) Provides that, for purposes of this subtitle and other applicable law, a honey production operation that extracts honey from honeycomb is harvesting a raw agricultural commodity and that bottles extracted honey and packages cut honeycomb is packaging a raw agricultural commodity without necessitating any additional manufacturing or processing.

SECTION 4. Effective date: September 1, 2025.