



J. Friend and Co finds sweet rewards in carbon consciousness

Jeremy Friend and Sharyn Woodnorth dreamed of making and selling the best honey they could without compromising the environment.

Their dream is now reality. J. Friend and Co Limited recently won a Cuisine and Cafe L'Affare Artisan Award 2011 for its New Zealand Artisan Beechwood Honeydew Honey.

The award is one tangible measure why the company's boutique range of single flower organic honeys, sourced from artisan beekeepers throughout New Zealand, is gaining bigger shelf space in Australia, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong and Japan.

Jeremy and Sharyn also attribute a great deal of their international success to their honey's carboNZero^{Cert™} certification. This certification, along with its organic status, makes the business and its products unique.

Some people have asked the couple why a company with only four workers (including Jeremy and Sharyn) would go to the time and expense of seeking certification.

Jeremy and Sharyn say their mission is simple: "We are committed to reducing our negative impact on the environment and ensuring the planet's future survival".

However, they have been delighted to find that the certification processes have also delivered significant efficiencies, longer-term planning benefits and new market opportunities that have led to increased export sales.

"For us it is a real win:win result," Sharyn says.

To achieve carbon-neutrality the couple chose carboNZero certification, the first Greenhouse Gas (GHG) certification programme to be internationally accredited to ISO 14065, which means the brand is recognised in 50 economies.

They started with the carboNZero "small enterprise" certification process in 2009. A small enterprise is one with a single site having GHG emissions of less than 50 tonnes per year. The process involves measurement of emissions using an on-line calculator and preparation of an emissions management and reduction plan. The final stage involves mitigation through the purchase of carbon credits, together with third-party verification to ensure that information entered is accurate before the business is certified.



In 2010 the couple upgraded to "organisation" and "product" certification, which meant all J. Friend and Co's organisational emissions and those associated with the GHG lifecycle of its products, including packaging, freight and waste, get measured, managed and where necessary offset by acquiring verified carbon credits.

J. Friend and Co bought credits, arranged through the carboNZero programme, through investing in a native forest regeneration project and a wind farm.

Jeremy says the costs of carboNZero certification have been more than recovered in savings that have been identified during the process. For one, while honey production has more than doubled, the company's energy costs have remained static. The couple now use gas for "on demand" water heating and they insulated work areas and installed a heat pump.

The future planning exercise saw them buying a much larger honey creaming machine than originally planned and the machine has not only cut energy costs but also allowed the company to cope with accelerated production demands.

Sharyn says certification has helped fine-tune the business: "It's a bit more work, but has cut our costs and helped us to be competitive."

That is particularly evident in the "food miles" conscious United Kingdom.

"With carboNZero certification British consumers can purchase our honey knowing that J. Friend & Co has measured, reduced and mitigated any GHG emissions associated with its organisation and products, including distribution to the UK market," Sharyn says. 'It enables our products to compete directly with local UK honey. Our honey can sit on the shelf alongside a local product and compete on an equal basis.'

