



Dear Nik Lupse,

Thank you very much for your efforts to protect the critical economic conditions for beekeeping in the EU. We strongly support this initiative in the Czech Republic. The information was published yesterday on the website of our association, www.majabee.cz, and this month, among other things, we will discuss this issue with the relevant department and with the Minister at the Ministry of Agriculture and at the Commodity Council of the Agrarian Chamber with Mr. Stanislav Jaš, President of the Copa-Cogeca Working Group for Honey. Information on these issues were also be published today (February 2th 2026) on the Czech websites:

This press release has been published through the service of the Czech News Agency (ČTK) PROTEXT.

The text was distributed to all users of the ČTK news service, which include MEDIA (press, TV, radio, internet publishers), ECONOMIC SPHERE (banks, insurance companies, investment companies, manufacturing enterprises, and other companies), and STATE ADMINISTRATION (ministries, government office, members of parliament, senators, local government institutions).

This report was also sent out via the Protex email service, is part of the ČTK applications for smartphones, and is publicly available on the websites here:

- protext.cz
- barrandov.tv
- buzzstore.cz
- ceskenoviny.cz
- cesko247.cz
- ekonews.cz
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- hrot24.cz
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- i-lifestyle.cz
- media24.cz
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- svethospodarstvi.cz
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The press release was received by the following subscribers:

- approx. 20 largest media outlets via backed-up secure SFTP transfer
- approx. 900 journalists, company representatives, and state institutions via the ČTK Infobank on the internet
- subscribers of the Prottext email service (up to 6000 addresses), primarily companies and to a lesser extent journalists
- users of ČTK mobile applications
- other readers on the internet thanks to news aggregators and portals that take over our press releases (TZ) according to content
- subscribers of NEWTON Media, Mediaboard, and TOXIN monitoring

Below is the text of the information as it is presented (in CZ):

The European Beekeeping Association (EBA), in a currently prepared letter to the EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Christophe Hansen (Luxembourg), expresses deep concern about the EU-Mercosur trade agreement and other negotiations (e.g., with India) that will lead to a significant increase in honey imports into the EU, and draws attention to inadequate mechanisms for monitoring and verifying the authenticity and quality of imported honey. The EBA demands the immediate establishment of an EU Reference Laboratory (EURL) for honey, the acceleration of the work of the Honey Platform, and the introduction of a targeted exception in border control legislation to ensure systematic physical checks of products at high risk of fraud, regardless of their public health risk classification, in order to prevent fraud, protect the economic viability of European beekeepers providing essential pollination services, and ensure consumer protection against adulterated honey.

What are the reasons for expressing this concern in the prepared letter to the EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Food?

Europe is not self-sufficient in honey production (it covers only about 60% of consumption), and the rest must be imported. The main players in EU honey imports in recent years have been China and Ukraine – in the Czech Republic, almost exclusively the latter. Approximately the same amount – more than 60,000 tonnes of honey – is imported annually into the EU from both China and Ukraine. China has long been the largest exporter of honey, keeping 9.5 million bee colonies. The massive increase in imports from Ukraine occurred after lower duty-free quotas for honey imports were set several years before the war in Ukraine. This import further massively increased with the complete liberalisation of imports due to duty-free trade because of the war. Honey that was previously exported mainly to the USA began to head to the EU. It is worrying that this export continued to grow in recent years and has already exceeded the previously stated maximum statistical production values for the entire country of 50,000 – 60,000 tonnes, which is difficult to explain. Therefore, it was

necessary to return to mild regulation with a still very high duty-free quota set. In Ukraine, which is still a European beekeeping superpower, 2,200,000 bee colonies are kept after a decline of about 0.5 million colonies due to the war. Despite this, total exports in recent years have still increased to unprecedented record values in the last 2 years. For comparison, Poland, with intensive agriculture and beekeeping, where 2,000,000 bee colonies are kept (about 10% fewer than Ukraine), has a honey production of up to 25,000 tonnes even in good years, and the Czech Republic, with today's 600,000 bee colonies, produces up to 8,000 tonnes of honey.

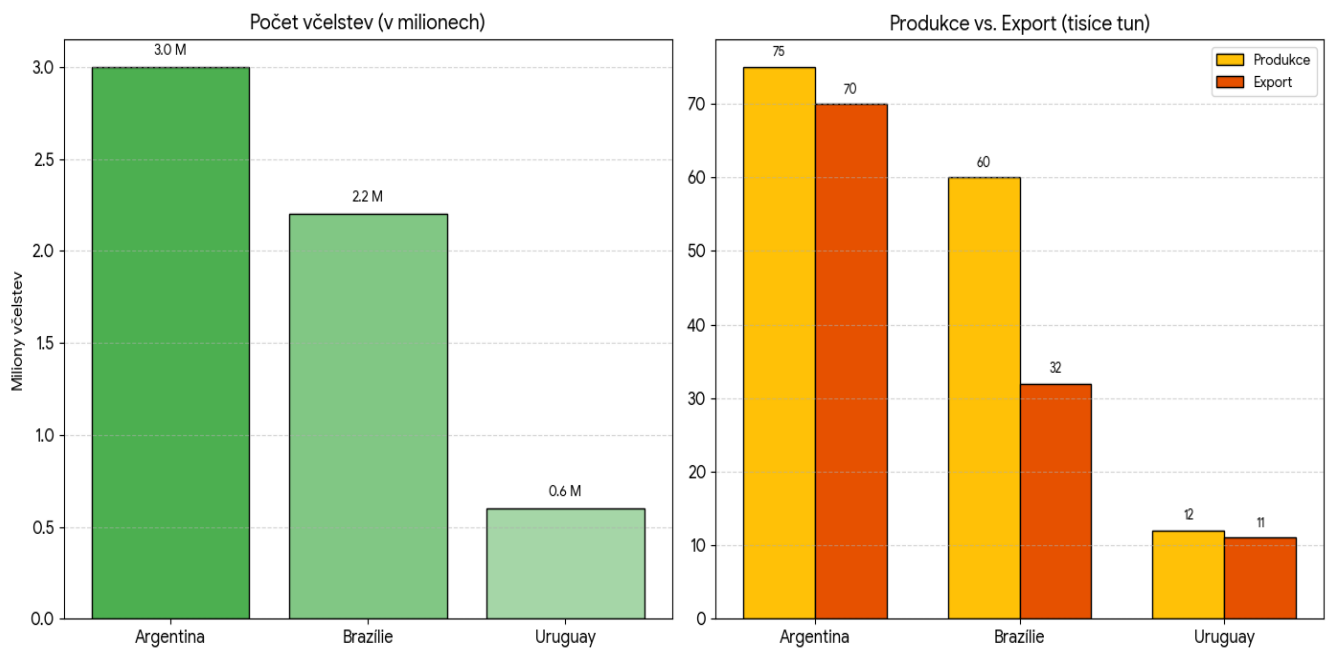
Because the EU is evidently completely failing to control imported honey from Eastern directions, as evidenced by a number of additional scandalous findings of sophisticated large-scale adulteration from samples in the retail network, further duty-free imports (which the USA never agreed to) from Mercosur countries pose the risk of "the final nail in the coffin of European beekeeping." The Mercosur group includes 3 very significant players in the global honey trade, who are currently subject to a 17.3% duty when imported into the EU: Argentina, with highly intensive beekeeping (3 million bee colonies), produces about 70,000 tonnes of honey, more than 90% of which is intended for export. It currently exports over 20,000 tonnes to the EU and is therefore the main exporter from Mercosur. The second exporter in the group is Brazil. It has the same number of bee colonies as Ukraine (2.2 million colonies) and honey production of up to 60,000 tonnes, half of which is intended for export. Of this, less than 5,000 tonnes has headed to Europe in recent years, but significant potential remains – for example, in 2012, Brazil exported 22,000 tonnes of honey to the EU. The third exporter in the Mercosur group is Uruguay. In this country, with a third of the population of the Czech Republic but more than twice the area, the number of bee colonies is the same as ours. Honey production reaches 12,000 tonnes, of which 10,000 tonnes are intended for export. Most exports from Mercosur currently – primarily for price reasons – go outside the EU.

After previous scandals due to the presence of residues of unauthorised substances and syrups, India exports negligible hundreds of tonnes of honey to the EU. However, the risk of eliminating European beekeeping in the event of any advantage for honey imports from this country to the EU is enormous, just as in the case of Mercosur countries. India would be capable of literally flooding the EU market with its annual honey exports approaching 100,000 tonnes. Currently, this production from 4.5 million bee colonies is directed mainly to the USA and Saudi Arabia.

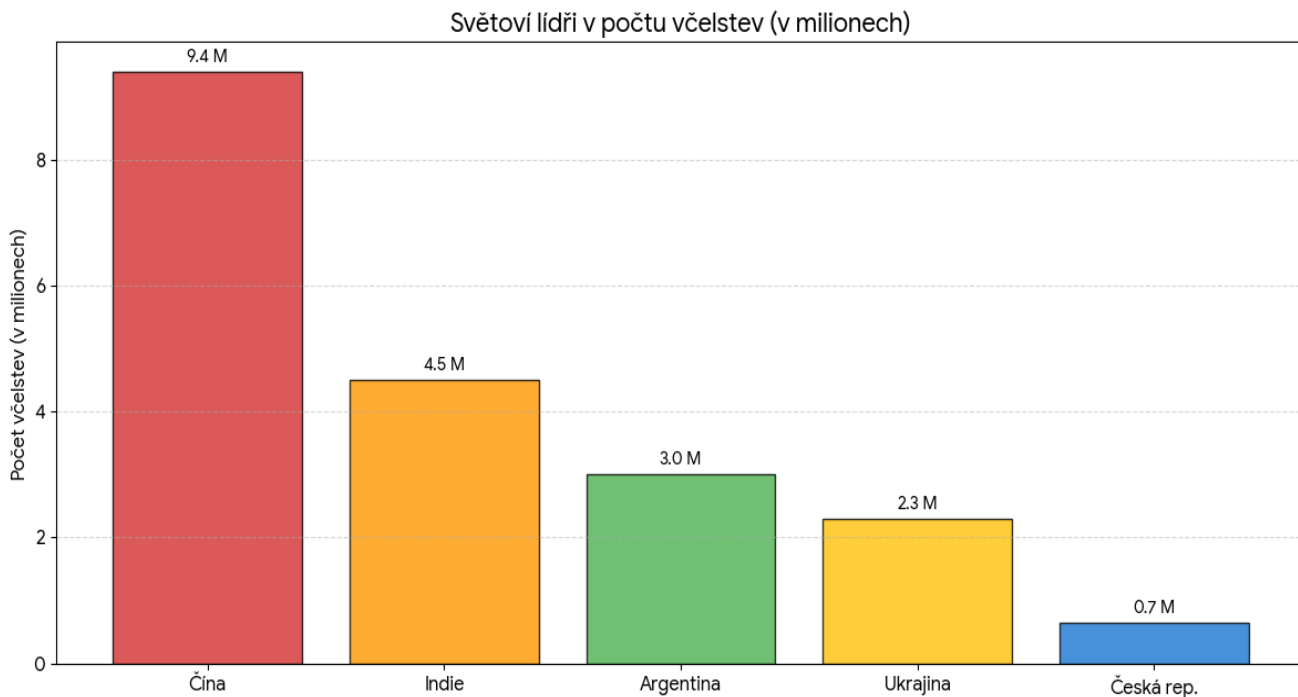
The agreement between the EU and the Mercosur countries (Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay) was politically negotiated back in 2019 but has not yet been ratified. It awaits approval by EU member states, where it faces resistance, especially from France, which perceives that European agriculture would pay for potential economic aid with the export of European automotive production.

However, if the agreement were to enter into force in its currently proposed form, it would not mean the abolition of customs duties on all honey. It would work as follows. The EU will open a duty-free quota of 45,000 tonnes of honey per year for Mercosur countries. The achievement of the duty-free quota is supposed to take 6 years of gradual tariff reduction, similar to Vietnam, which achieved the advantage of exporting honey to the EU duty-free in the summer of last year. (Due to known quality problems, Vietnamese honey production has not gained much ground in the EU market, and the EU buys Chinese honey mostly directly). Only after 6 years would a 0% tariff apply to 45,000 tonnes of honey from Mercosur countries annually.

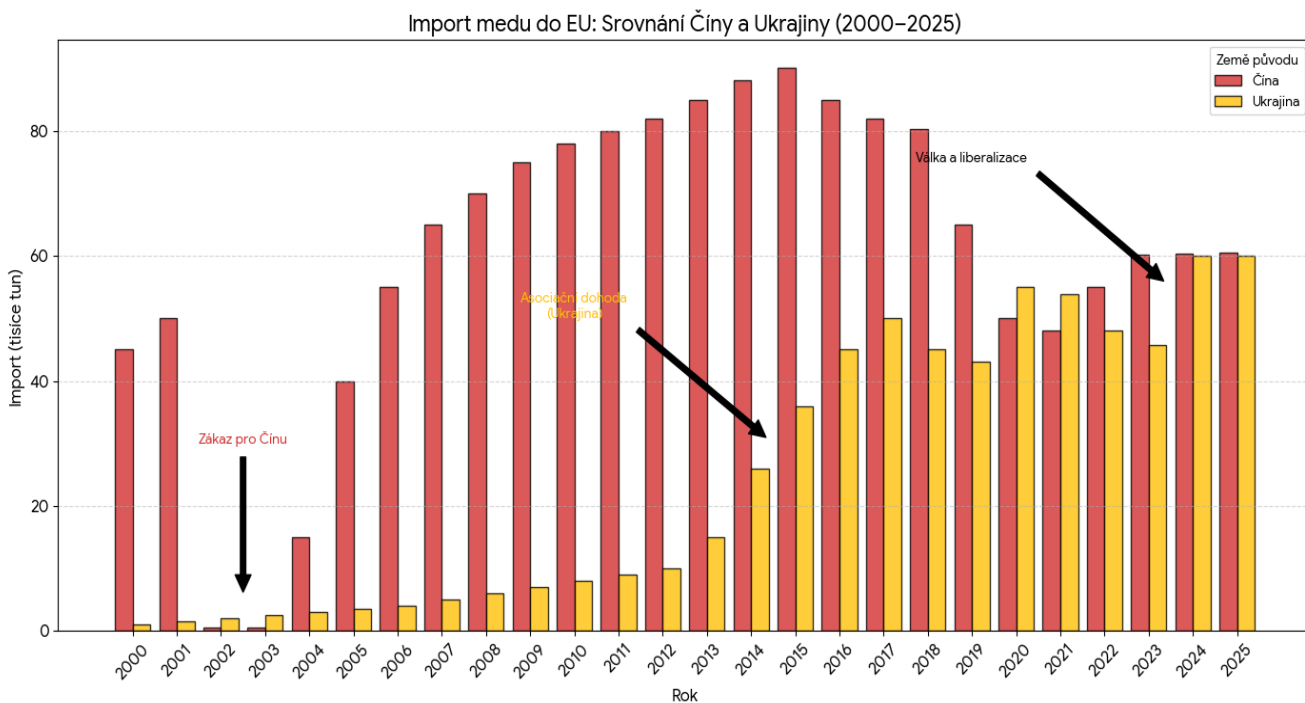
Why are we discussing this? Mercosur countries (mainly Argentina and Brazil) export over 100,000 tonnes of honey worldwide annually. The quota of 45,000 tonnes therefore does not cover their entire export potential. However, for European beekeepers, this is still a sensitive issue because 45,000 tonnes of cheap duty-free honey could further depress prices in a market where prices are already determined by imports of honey of questionable quality at dumping prices, which not even Mercosur countries can currently match, and often not even countries with earlier and still valid bilateral agreements with the EU - Mexico, which has had duty-free honey imports into the EU since 2000, and Chile (an associate member of Mercosur), which has applied duty-free imports to the EU since 2003.



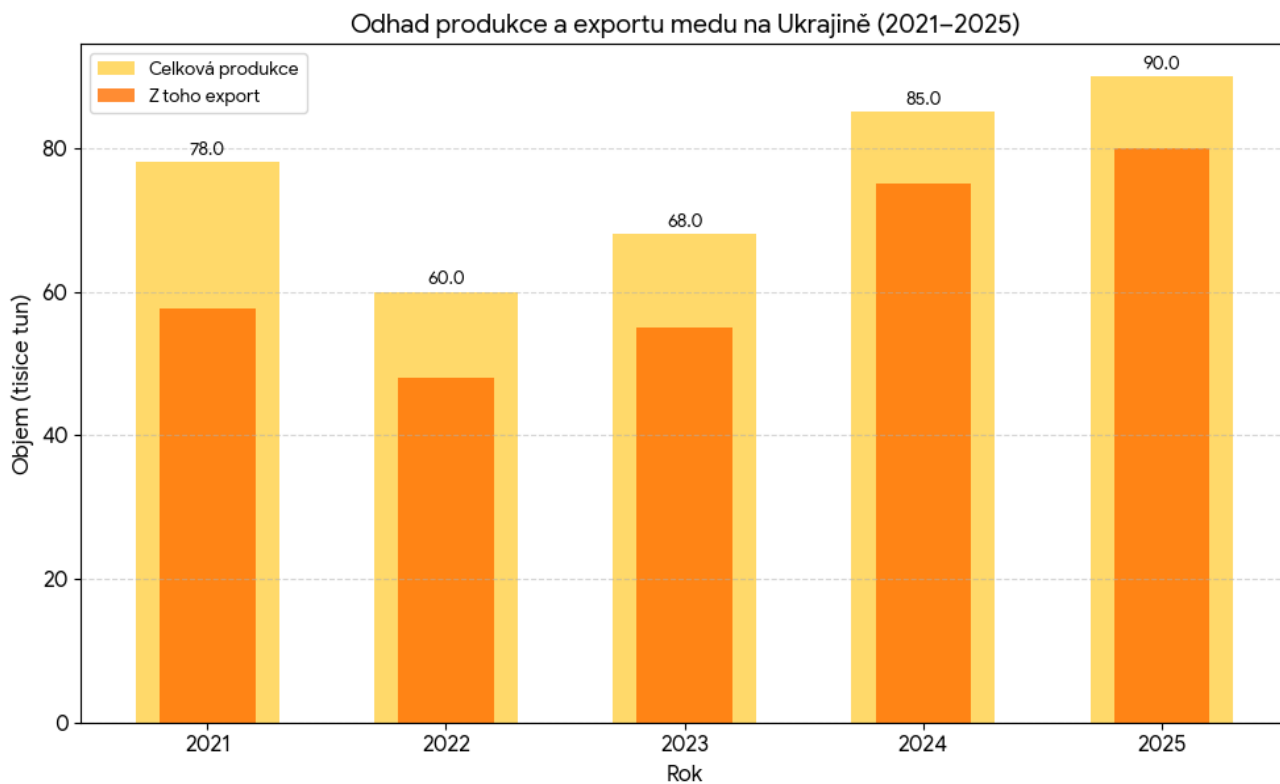
Beekeeping in Mercosur countries with significant honey exports.



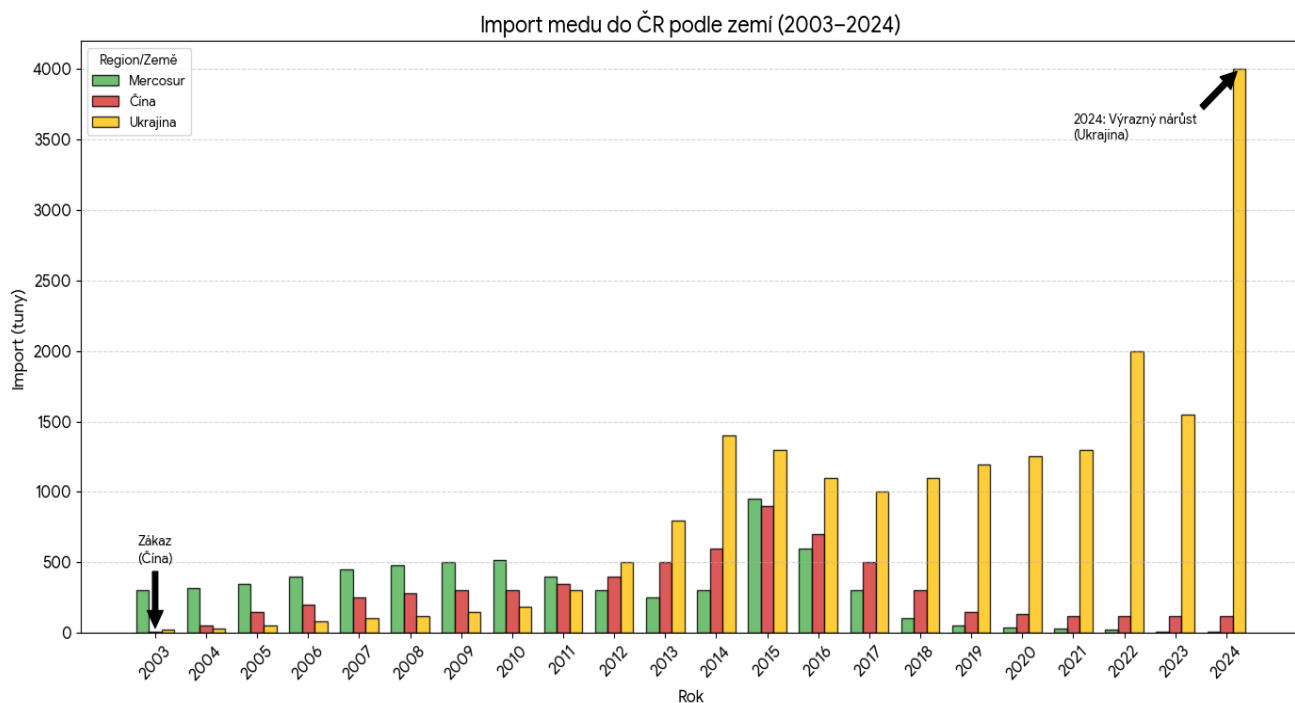
Countries with the highest number of bee colonies – in the Czech Republic currently only 0.6 million colonies.



The development of honey imports into the EU and its impact on bans, customs barriers, and their abolition, using the example of China and Ukraine.

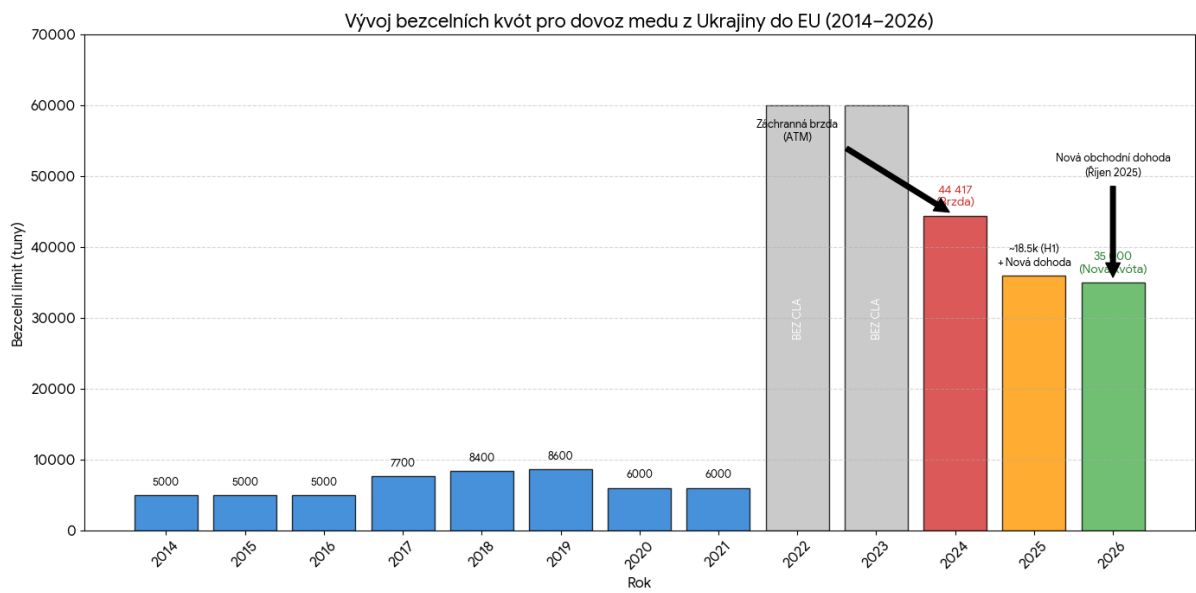


The development of honey production and export in Ukraine in recent years.



Honey imports into the Czech Republic:

Mercosur countries (what earlier to be is not) – China (?) – Ukraine (what never was is)



The influence and necessity of regulation are evident even in the extremely liberal EU trade policy.

RNDr. Václav Švamberg

Chairman

Czech Beekeeping Development Society