

Chris and Christy Hiemstra, Ontario

Clovermead Bees and Honey

There's a definite buzz at Clovermead Bees and Honey and Chris and Christy Hiemstra are extremely proud of that. Located in Aylmer, Ontario, on just 11 acres, the Hiemstras keep 900 hives of honey bees, direct market processed honey through an on-farm experience and market bee pollen for human consumption through a separate company, API Nutrition Ltd.

After achieving his Diploma in Agriculture at the University of Guelph, Chris started BioPol, a company which produced bumblebees for the greenhouse industry in Leamington. In 1996, Chris sold this company to Koopert Canada and continued to work with them as an IPM advisor. In 2000, Chris persuaded his wife Christy to leave their urban life in Leamington and move to Aylmer where they purchased the family bee business. Bee hives have always been rented out to local farmers for pollination but the Hiemstras now ship bees to New Brunswick for four weeks to pollinate low bush blueberries. Beekeeping equipment has been standardized and upgraded and they have modernized the honey extraction line to gain efficiencies. Low honey commodity prices lead them to market directly to consumers on their farm. Clovermead is now an agri-tourism destination where consumers not only purchase honey but can learn about the importance of honeybees to food production through interactive farm displays and tours. To diversify Clovermead's income, API Nutrition was established to dry and clean bee pollen for the Canadian health food market. A continuous flow system for processing the pollen has improved the efficiency of this operation. The genetics of their 24 million bees has been improved by producing their own queen bees.

The three Hiemstra children, aged 9 – 13 are enthusiastic helpers on the farm. Chris and Christy are involved with many farm and community organizations including serving on the executive of the Ontario Beekeepers Association, Immanuel Christian School, Aylmer Chamber of Commerce and Aylmer Christian Reformed Church.