

THE ROLE OF BEEKEEPING FOR DEVELOPMENT A JOINT STATEMENT

The beekeeping experts and representatives of many organisations active in beekeeping and other development areas, meeting in Brussels on 26 March 2010, jointly decide that better coordinated efforts are necessary to give more recognition to beekeeping and improve its contribution to livelihood and food security development. Therefore they agree that:

- 1 Sustainable beekeeping practice is a significant development tool in rural areas and particularly for Least Developed Countries because:
 - a. it can generate income for the landless rural poor and the undercapitalised small- to medium-size family farms;
 - b. it can produce income and therefore improve food security, especially in marginal agricultural production areas and in or near protected nature reserves.¹ Moreover, it provides important nutritional supplements to local diets;
 - c. it is suitable for men and women alike;
 - d. it offers significant income in trade and value-adding; it can promote rural development, including for small scale enterprises through the production of beekeeping equipment (hives, bee suits, centrifuges, etc.) and processing of beekeeping products (honey beverages, candles, cosmetics, etc.);
 - e. it ensures permanently available natural remedies within the local health care (apitherapy) and supplements (nutrition);
 - f. it contributes to increasing pollination and as such enhances quality and quantity of fruit and seed production;
 - g. it maintains biodiversity and preserves the natural habitat in land-use planning, such as avoiding felling of trees on which bees forage.

Because of its multi-purpose role and the crucial position of the honey bee in the food chain, beekeeping should be an integrated part of rural development strategies and policies, not only for

- 1) the direct benefit of human well-being (MDG 1 & 7²), but also for
- 2) the parallel environmental services it provides – pollination, pollinator protection, biodiversity conservation and, indirectly, reduced and more responsible pesticide applications because of higher awareness.

Beekeeping is for most beekeepers a supplementary activity and therefore also often plays only a secondary role in development policies by countries and donor agencies. This leaves its true contribution to the rural economy undervalued and not considered meritoriously. In many countries there is no appropriate institutional support for the beekeeping sector and beekeeping may be treated as an “orphan activity”. It results that regions which are propitious to the development of beekeeping are under-utilised and village beekeepers more often than not receive little or no attention in public policies.

¹ Honey and other products of the hive may be qualified as non-wood forest products (NWFP). Defined by the FAO, 1999: “Non-wood forest products are goods of biological origin other than wood, derived from forests, other woodland areas, and from trees outside of forests”.

² MDG – Millennium Development Goals 1 End Poverty and Hunger & 7 Environmental Sustainability and, to a lesser extent, 3 Gender Equality and 4 Child health <http://www.un.org/fr/millenniumgoals>

It is our strong belief that higher visibility and attention to beekeeping as a development tool will bring not only benefits to beekeepers but to rural populations as a whole (still more than 70% of the world's poor) and will contribute directly and indirectly to sustainability and food security.

- 2 Most beekeeping initiatives, both public and private, are small, dispersed, short-term and a more or less important add-on to other activities. Collaborative efforts, mostly local, exist as do rare synergetic effects. Frequently, one can find several beekeeping programmes within the same area or shortly after each other. Experiences are not shared and mistakes repeated. Most efforts are not part of or supported by a larger policy or strategic approach or share a common perspective. Thus potential benefits of integration across whole Value Chains or using Chain Empowerment are missed.
- 3 To more effectively use limited resources and capacities and obtain more sustainable results, the signatories of this Memorandum invite others to join them in their decision to unite efforts to:
 - create higher awareness among governmental and non-governmental aid agencies for beekeeping as a multi-purpose tool in rural development and as a serious business and livelihood opportunity,
 - facilitate information sharing and include reporting on the impact of beekeeping on food quality and security and rural development in information materials and communications,
 - increase access to knowledge of existing expertise, experience and resources,
 - build an open network of initiatives in beekeeping development, on national and international levels, both in the Northern and Southern hemispheres.
- 4 A working group shall be formed so as to implement these actions and seek the necessary means, both in terms of people and financing.
- 5 In recognition of the joint conclusions drawn in this Memorandum, participants and organizations here present assist and support the creation of the above-mentioned working group and the implementation of the initiatives identified above.

Agreed in Brussels on 26 March 2010.

List of participants (where appropriate, write the organisation name in brackets after that of its representative).