



Tropentag, October 7-9, 2008, Hohenheim

“Competition for Resources in a Changing World:
New Drive for Rural Development”

Overview of Traditional Beekeeping in Sudan

MAYMOONA AHMED EISA, MECHTHILD ROTH

Technische Universität Dresden, Institute of Forest Botany and Forest Zoology, Germany

Abstract

Sudan is the largest country in Africa. Agriculture is of particular importance to the gross national product (GNP). Main agricultural crops are cotton, peanuts, sorghum, barley, sesame, wheat and gum Arabic produced from *Acacia senegal* trees. Moreover, traditional beekeeping plays regionally an important socio-economical role in Sudan.

The honeybee, *Apis mellifera* L., occurs naturally in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. This diverse range of habitats has required adaptation to a variety of ecological and climatic conditions and historical separation has caused the evolution of over 24 named subspecies. On the basis of morphology, these subspecies have been grouped into four distinct evolutionary branches, namely the African, the western and northern European, the southeastern European, as well as the Middle Eastern. Molecular analyses have broadly supported this classification.

In Sudan along the two Niles, honey bees (*Apis mellifera*) occur rarely North of Ed Dueim and Wad Medani. At Kosti, they are compelled to utilise densely foliated mango trees and build combs on horizontal branches. The little bee (*Apis florea*) of the Middle East was first recorded in Sudan in 1987 in Khartoum, where it utilises thick shady trees and shrubs for building its small single multiuse comb. Although placid, it is not very adaptable to apicultural practices; the honey is not easy to harvest without detaching the entire comb and thereby destroying the swarm, so it is of limited commercial significance.

Bee keeping in Sudan has not been practised on a highly developed level with conservation and optimum yields in view. Most of the honey is gathered from wild swarms located in hollow trees, using traditional destructive methods.

Spray programs along the Nile against tree locusts or desert locusts within the range of the apiaries will need to ensure the application of pesticides which are non toxic to bees.

In most of the gum belt though, bees are either not present or are too infrequent to require special precautions. In addition there is a need for inhibition of various practices to collect honey wildly like firing, smoking by using non-target chemicals and felling of trees.

Keywords: *Apis mellifera*, beekeeping, Sudan