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Challenges and Opportunities for Market-Oriented Apiculture Development: The Case of Ada’A-Liben District, Ethiopia

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Abstract

Beekeeping has been practised in Ethiopia for centuries and currently the country is a leader in Africa in terms of volumes of honey and beeswax produced and traded. Ethiopia produces between 24,600 and 43,000 tonnes of honey per year, and is also one of the five biggest wax exporters with an average annual export estimated at 3,000 tonnes. In spite of the huge potential of the sector, production and productivity have been low due to poor quality beehives, lack of good bee management system, low quality of hive products and lack of skills by beekeepers. The objective of this study was to characterise the current beekeeping system, identify the constraints and provide solutions through the introduction of improved and market-oriented beekeeping practice using the value chain approach in Ada’a-Liben district as a case study site. Systematic and step-wise approaches were employed to assess the production system and implement the interventions. Interventions included improvements in production system, market assessment and institutional linkages between producers and stakeholders. The main activities were identification of pilot intervention sites, beekeepers mobilisation and group formation, capacity building through visits and training and constant demonstration and follow ups, as well as linking beekeepers to credit facilities and markets. During the last two years of the study (2005–07), 60 beekeepers received training, 4 beekeepers associations were formed in Yerer, Godino, Denkaka, and Adulala rural Kebeles and received certificates. During this time about 40 transitional hives (Kenyan top-bar) and 80 wooden framed hives (Langstroth) were introduced. In general, improvement in the management of apiary has been observed and the quantity and quality of honey produced have improved. This paper provides highlights of strengths and constraints of apiculture in Ethiopia and describes apiculture development potential and interventions done to improve the existing production system in Ada’a-Liben district. It presents the intervention strategies and the lessons learned in knowledge sharing, capacity building, market linkage, and beekeepers group formation for better production technologies, input supply, and marketing and credit facilitation. It also provides valuable information for scaling up of the lessons to other areas with similar potential for apiculture development.

Keywords: Beekeeping, Ethiopia, market-oriented, marketing, production