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## Circumstances, Constraints and Prospects of Honey-Bee (*Apis mellifera*) Conservation: The Case of Dale District, Sidama Zone, Southern Ethiopia

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### Abstract

This scientific study was conducted in South Nation nationalities and Peoples Regional State, Sidama zone, Dale district. It examines the major constraints and prospects of honey-bee (*Apis mellifera*) conservation at the grass root level. The study mainly focused on identification of the constraints that hamper beekeeping practices and also serve as disincentives for non-beekeepers to participate in the activity. Data were collected from 36 keepers, 24 non-beekeepers and 11 peasant association chairmen and development agents.

Combination of RRA tools (key informant interview, in-depth semi-structured interview, group discussion and observation) were employed to collect primary data from beekeepers, non-beekeepers, and peasant association chairman. Intensive field observation was carried out to visit apiary site of the beekeeper households to collect tangible data and observe practically their current status in beekeeping practices. All necessary secondary data were also collected from relevant sources.

Honey-bee pests (ants, wax moth (*Galleria mellonena*), birds, lizard), high cost of modern beehives, shortage of improved bee forage, lack of beekeeping equipment, dependence on traditional production system, lack of market and credit access, and poor extension methods are the main constraints of beekeeping development in the area. Among the beekeeping constraints and/or threats honey-bee pests, cost of beehives and shortage of bee forage during dry season were the most pertinent factors accounting for 32%, 19.5% and 13% of the sample respondents, respectively. The study also revealed that lack of appropriate beekeeping training, financial problem, and appropriate extension methods were the core features hindering the non-beekeepers to participate in beekeeping activities.

Even though several constraints stalled beekeeping development in the area, participatory watershed management, high motivation of the beekeepers and non-beekeepers, traditional knowledge of farmers, availability of indigenous tree species as bee forage and participation of all family members in beekeeping activities were among the aspects that encourage honey-bee conservation in the area.

The study concluded that beekeeping practice in the district is more traditional and affected by main constraints. Hence, technical and institutional support from the government, and provision of long-term credits could result in a sustainable way of honey production and bee forage management.

**Keywords:** Bee forage, beekeeping development, constraints, Ethiopia Dale district, honey-bee conservation, prospective, RRA (Rapid Rural Appraisal), traditional knowledge