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Identifying Honeys for Geographical Indication Recognition: Motivation for Land Use Improvement and Honey Bee Conservation

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Abstract

Pollinator decline is a global issue due to the impact on food production. This study addresses local pollinator decline and land use management in local communities by valorization of honey through Geographical Indication (GI). Ghana has potential to create monetary value from origin honey. GIs give a premium to producers of Oku white honey in Cameroon hence provide an incentive for conserving the most important factors: honey bees (*Apis mellifera*) and the environment (Proper land management), which is also key to food security. The challenge is, GIs as a potential tool to conserve pollinators and improve land use is currently not being promoted in Ghana. The State has to introduce local quality labels, laws, policies, a regulatory framework, agricultural extension services, market analysis (national, regional, international), capacity building and improved value chain infrastructure in the honey sector.

Two objectives were followed; (a) Identify honey producing regions with potential for GI recognition; (b) Assess the potential of conserving local pollinators and improving land use management using GI honeys. Relevant literature and documents were reviewed. Experts views were also sorted on potential GI honeys. Interviews were made with 16 individual honey packagers on honeys with good reputation and with 31 individual local honey producers regarding value addition to their honeys, the potential of improving local land use management and local pollinator conservation in the communities. 30 honey consumers were surveyed on readiness to pay an extra cedi for a GI honey in Ghana after explaining the concept to them.

Data showed that, the Volta Region have honeys with good reputation based on quality perception; clean, smooth, viscous, sweet, its liquid nature, no heating, unadulterated and shelf life. Periodic training on best practices and knowledge sharing amongst local beekeepers played a key role to maintain honey quality. Beekeepers agreed that a good market, which is currently a challenge, could be an incentive and motivate them to conserve local pollinators as well as improve proper land use management in their communities. Most beekeepers interviewed are also crop farmers. All 30 consumers showed readiness to pay an extra cedi for a GI honey in Ghana. Therefore, creating monetary value as a resolution will encourage local farmers/beekeepers to conserve honey bees through appropriate land use and agricultural practices. Furthermore, value addition to local honey and appropriate marketing may also generate needed rural employment options.

Keywords: Beekeepers, Ghana, geographical indications, honey, land use management, pollinator decline