

Starting a Beekeeping Development Project - A Tool for Decision Making

Ms Pam Gregory and Dr Gay Marris *
Plan Bee, Pentrebwlen SY 25 6PA Wales UK

*FERA, National Bee Unit, Sand Hutton, York YO4 1LZ

It is well accepted that honey production could be a key activity for smallscale farmers, hunter-gatherers and pastoralists in developing countries. The wealth of natural resources in the world's forest communities could support major honey production, and beekeeping offers sustainable use of natural ecosystems, promoting biodiversity. It is a stark fact, however, that this huge potential is far from being realised. Constraints lie in the daunting array barriers faced by rural beekeepers, including rapid loss of natural resources, poor land access, limited entrepreneurial capacity in subsistence communities, lack of market connections to encourage producer expansion, inadequate access to supply chain infrastructure, poor logistical understanding, the complexity of exporting & specialist marketing schemes, and the potential regulatory burden on producers. To achieve a successful beekeeping project, local constraints must be understood and addressed, enabling appropriate choices to be made by all concerned. Beekeeping development projects attract NGO interest and donor funding worldwide, but knowing how to implement a well-planned programme is less straightforward. Many fail due to excessive emphasis on new production methods that rely on modern western ideas, while the limitations of indigenous techniques has become a paradigm that does not bear close examination. We present a decision making tool designed to help those interested in starting a beekeeping project to consider the appropriateness of this activity in any chosen locality. Attention to the presence or absence of the building blocks necessary for beekeeping, or whether it is feasible to put them in place, will maximise the chances that beekeeping can improve the lives of the intended beneficiaries.