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Nicola Bradbear

APIMONDIA

PRESIDENT Standing Commission Beekeeping for Rural Development

Bees for Development, UK

DIRECTOR
Beekeeping development in 2011
• Most of the world’s poorest people practise subsistence agriculture
• Many of these people are beekeepers or honey hunters
Global problems in 2011

- Poverty and unemployment
- Climate change
- Urban sprawl
- Deforestation
- Rising fuel costs
- Biodiversity loss
- Loss of security
- Water shortage
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<th>Aid – is a quick fix</th>
<th>Development – is long term change</th>
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<td><strong>For example:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Giving cash</td>
<td>• Access to credit</td>
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<td>• Food in times of famine</td>
<td>• Ensuring food security</td>
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<td>• Replacement hives for those lost in earthquake</td>
<td>• Developing honey market systems</td>
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Development – is slow, long term assistance

Helping beekeepers to move from subsistence beekeeping ~ to significant income generation
Subsistence beekeeper

- Poor and remote
- Honey provides a ‘safety net’ in times of need
- How to change this into beekeeping creating significant income?
What is the best way to help these beekeepers?

- Top-bar hives
- Frame hives
- Training
- Micro-credit
- Honey jars
- Bee suits
- Buckets
- Build a road
- A place to store honey and beeswax
- Internet access
- HACCP regulations
- A bee house
- Bicycles
- Bees for Development Journal
- Access to a honey buyer
Bees for Development’s Top 10 recommendations to achieve sustainable growth by means of beekeeping
Recomendation 1

Identify the true constraints facing beekeepers

1. Biological?
2. Technical?
3. Institutional?
4. Financial?
5. Market?

And find out what interventions have taken place already
Recommendation 2

Use local bees wherever possible because:

1. Local bees are adapted to their environment
2. No risk of importing pathogens
Recommendation 3

Gain knowledge of local bee biology and behaviour

Learn about local bees’ nesting, swarming, migration and absconding behaviour
Honey bees have varying biology and behaviour according to the environment where they have evolved.
Recommendation 4
Never ignore local apicultural skills

Understand and appreciate the knowledge of local beekeepers: their management of bee colonies may be excellent
Recommendation 5

Understand the issues around technology choice

Consider:
1. The paradigm shift you may be causing
2. Poor people’s need for risk minimisation
Technology choice - the best hive is:

- appropriate for the biology and behaviour of bees being housed inside it
- appropriate for the resources available to the beekeeper
- facilitates good care of the colony
- enables efficient honey and beeswax harvest
- takes into consideration the behaviour of local pests and predators
- is suitable for the prevailing climate
There can be good business in hive and equipment provision to projects.
The developing world is full of honey processing plants like this - not in use

- Emphasis on “modern”, imported technology
- Emphasis on increasing production per hive
- Packing plants remain empty - honey volumes remain low, because market systems do not work
Unsuccessful projects tend not to be reported.

It is only after the project has closed that the lack of success is evident - to those who are interested.

Often the beekeepers are blamed.

Many donors have become fatigued with beekeeping projects.
Many beekeeping projects have failed. Too often – donated hives remain empty
Project planners, donors, government departments

- It is not easy to assist people who are poor and remote
- PMAs [Plans for Modernisation of Agriculture]
- Capital inputs are easy to deliver, and provide fast, tangible, visible evidence of support
- Globalised methods appear easy to provide – standard inputs (bees, equipment, know how)
- And one bee can look much like another..
Why do projects persist in focussing on equipment delivery?

This approach rarely brings significant benefits.

• Poor situation analysis – planners believe (wrongly) that provision of equipment is the key intervention point for ‘commercialising’ and ‘modernising’ apiculture
First response usually to recommend change to a ‘modern’ movable comb hive.

Rationale is to enable:

• More honey
• Better quality honey
• Keep bees healthy by inspecting them
• Keep colonies strong by manipulating them
• Allow to rear queens, make splits
You are making the beekeeper change from an extensive beekeeping system to intensive beekeeping.
Extensive beekeeping

This system may seem unproductive and unreliable at the level of a single hive
Extensive beekeeping in tropical Africa is viewed as part of an extensive system they are:

• efficient
• low risk
• cost-effective
• And the bees are healthy
Crucial characteristics in this step:
1. Change in focus – from the whole honey bee population, to individual colonies in hives
2. Change in strategy - from minimal management, to more intensive colony management.
Crucial characteristics in this step:

3. Change in hive type – from low cost to expensive - each colony must pay its way

4. Hive type enables intensive colony management

AND Further ‘hidden’ consequences for bee health
Recommendation 6

Be prepared to invest in training and follow-up support

1. It takes two years to train a beekeeper
2. Trainers must know far more than beekeeping. They must provide business skills to create and run apiculture enterprises
Recommendation 7

Consider issues of market access

Producer organisations are crucial for beekeepers to engage profitably in the market chain

They must be:

• Business focussed
• Main objective is collective marketing
• Producer owned and managed

BUT costs must be kept low or the organisation will fail
Market access challenges

I can produce honey, but there is no market
Market access challenges

I could sell local honey, but there are no supplies
The problems are perceived to be:

- By beekeepers: no market
- By traders: no supplies –
- This is interpreted as ‘low production’

The real problem is lack of a functioning market chain.
Negative feedback cycle

Informal trade → Traders are opportunistic → Market does not motivate beekeepers to invest → No investment, volumes remain low → Serious packers discouraged → Informal trade
New supply chain links are needed to build a positive cycle.
STRENGTHENING TRADE – THE FUTURE

• Work to develop direct to packer supply route
• Develop commercial collection centre systems
• Build the business skills of beekeepers
• Build trading groups of beekeepers
• Invest in relationship building
• Enable financial investment for packers
Sustainable supply chains, based on business principles and good relationships between producers and packers, are the key to scaling up the industry
Selling more honey means finding new markets.

This places new demands on beekeepers to organise and meet market quality expectations.
Recommendation 8

Understand the issues around honey quality

1. The best quality honey is in the bees’ nest
2. Excellent handling is of utmost importance
Honey *quality* means different things:

The principle of maintaining honey just as the bees perfected it, *or*

- ‘Quality’ according to defined standards and market criteria, e.g. national or EU criteria
- ‘Quality’ according to the consumer’s personal preference: taste, colour, consistency
- ‘Quality’ of the shelf product: good packaging and labelling
Recommendation 9

Fully explore and saturate the domestic market before considering export.

Add value to products.

Create niche products by telling the story of their production, and create secondary products.
Recommendation 10

Aim to build a business that is sustainable in every aspect

Beekeeping projects must not subsidise honey production or trade
BfD’s ten recommendations for successful beekeeping development

1. Identify the true constraints facing beekeepers
2. Use local bees wherever possible
3. Gain knowledge of local bee biology and behaviour
4. Never ignore local apicultural skills
5. Understand the issues around technology choice
6. Be prepared to invest in training & follow-up support
7. Consider issues of market access
8. Understand the issues around honey quality
9. Add value to products. Fully explore and saturate the domestic market before considering export
10. Aim to build a business that is sustainable in every aspect
What was the best way to help these beekeepers in Kyrgyzstan?

Top-bar hives  Frame hives  A place to store honey and beeswax

Smokers  Beesuits  Build a road  Internet access

Buckets  Training  HACCP regulations  Bees for Development Journal

Honey jars  Micro-credit  A bee house  Access to a honey buyer
Access rights to pastures
Thank you!

nicolabradbear@beesfordevelopment.org

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Bees for Development

www.beesfordevelopment.org
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