

The sweet bite of the bee

In the central part of Mozambique, beekeeping is an established tradition. However, the market is still a bottleneck for local producers. A capacity development project and a public-private partnership in honey marketing are to help improve the income situation of the population and simultaneously ensure forest conservation.

Almost 60 percent of Mozambique's territory is covered by forests, which comprise a great natural potential for honey production, since they are home to different fauna, bees in particular. Illegal logging, wildfires and shifting cultivation, contributing to unprecedented climate problems, are constantly putting pressure on this vegetation. However, 60 percent of the population live in rural areas, and always have to rely on the forest and other natural resources for their subsistence.

■ A public-private partnership to handle marketing

In central Mozambique, where local communities are familiar with the importance and value of honey, beekeeping is an established tradition. It is used basically as source of food, especially in times when agricultural production is low, and is also in common use for medicinal purposes. Despite an increase in demand, the market is still a bottleneck for some local producers, due to low-quality products and the producers' informal market approach. In order to address these issues, a new initiative has been promoted by V&M Grain Co, a leading company involved in the commercialisation of different types of cereal in Manica province. Mozambique

Honey Company (MHC) is going to deal with marketing and commercialising of locally produced honey. The company shall be represented by V&M Grain Co, Honey Producers Cooperative, and Eco-Micaia, a local development organisation, sharing 40 percent, 40 percent and 10 percent respectively. It is expected that after five years, the cooperative shall represent 5,000 producers. This arrangement has the potential to address the struggle of markets in the honey value chain, and can also reduce pressure on the vegetation. Local markets are the main target of MHC, as it shall promote the consumption of local products. However, regional and international markets are also part of the company's marketing strategy, especially for high-quality organic honey.

■ Legalisation, capacity building, management skills

Sussundenga district, in Manica province, was the first area to promote organising the honey producers into associations, and to further constitute these associations in the Mozambique Honey Company. Community Land initiative (ITC), a project supported by a group of Euro-

pean donors led by DfID (Department for International Development, UK) and managed by KPMG (a provider of audit, tax and advisory services) in collaboration with the Natural Resources Institute (UK), supported the strengthening of the company, especially from the community side, and enhancing the local community's participation and role in the business venture. Support focused on two key activities: registration and legalisation of producer groups, and capacity building of the groups towards business development. These key activities are considered to be crucial in the honey production value chain.

A total of twelve associations are now formally legalised. These are composed of 307 members 76 of whom are women. Through ITC financial support, estimated at 17,000 US dollars, these associations started to follow the steps of the new Mozambique Honey Company in May 2010. Apart from legalisation, the producers received technical training on the establishment of hives,

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The first honey has already been harvested. The producers have received technical training on the whole production chain – from establishing the hives through to storage of the honey.

Photo: J. Monteiro



management of bees and collection/ extraction and storage of honey. Some also learnt how to construct wooden beehives.

Building business-oriented skills was considered crucial in the iTC support package. Therefore, the contents addressed in the short courses targeting the twelve association members included stock and revenues management, production planning and marketing. Complementary courses, such as leadership and participatory management, including woman empowerment, were also given to all the associations' members as part of the capacity-building activities.

■ Expected impacts

Enhancing community development seems to be a reasonable expected impact at local level, although some specific impacts can be attributed, such as

- forest conservation through reduction of wildfires;
- income generation for honey producers and their families;
- involvement of communities in large-scale business initiatives.

Indirect impacts can include enhancing the pollination process in food crop fields and raising exports of local products.

The newly induced beehives raise production and protect the trees.

Not only does the newly induced beehive increase production, it also offers the local community a new approach in dealing with the environment. It reduces the use of barks of trees as hives besides contributing to the production of massive amounts of pollen to feed the bees.

The environmental part of the sustainability process is assured by wildfire reduction and the introduction of modern beehives. The legal structure created in the form of the association can promote development through the strong link to the market (MHC) and the business management skills acquired. In addition, the local government, as part of its primary role in assistance through extension services, is already involved in the project, to disseminate the good/best practices among other potential communities.

■ The first step has been made ...

Some of the project expectations are being met on the ground. The community is very interested in this new approach to producing honey, basically because it can become an additional source of income. Producers are skilled and ready for business, and some honey is already being harvested. A factory is



Photo: J. Monteiro

being built and will be ready soon. The honey bought by MHC is kept in clean and appropriate containers.

According to the business plan financed by SNV (Netherlands Development Organisation) for MHC, it is envisaged that the average beekeeper will have ten hives, yielding up at least 120 kilograms in total, and realising up to 390 US dollars per yield. In order to boost honey production in the entire province, contacts and synergies have been promoted with some local funding programmes and credit institutions, some of which have showed an interest in being involved in the business.

Through job promotion and an exchange of experience among producers, every single bee bite can clearly be transformed into sweet honey drops, promoting community development and natural resource management.

Zusammenfassung

Im Rahmen ihres Engagements für die lokale Gemeindeentwicklung in Mozambique unterstützt die Community-Land-Initiative (iTC), ein von einer europäischen Gebergruppe finanziertes Projekt, eine Honigerzeugungskette in Mozambique, vor allem im Bezirk Sussundenga in der Provinz Manica. Hierzu zählt in erster Linie der Kapazitätsaufbau lokaler Honigerzeuger, die sich dann in Genossenschaften zusammenschließen sollen. Diese Genossenschaften sollen insgesamt 40 Prozent der Anteile an der kürzlich gegründeten Honiggesellschaft „Mozambique Honey Company (MHC)“ halten. Zwölf Erzeugergruppen mit insgesamt 307 Mitgliedern werden als erste

von der Initiative gefördert. Die Capacity-Building-Maßnahmen der iTC sollen auch auf andere Orte ausgeweitet werden, um so neben der Schaffung von Einkommen auch die Nutzung der natürlichen Ressourcen zu verbessern, zum Beispiel durch das Eindämmen der Brandrodung und ein besseres Waldmanagement.

Resumen

Como parte de su compromiso con el desarrollo comunitario local en Mozambique, la iniciativa Tierra Comunitaria (iTC) – un proyecto financiado por un grupo de donantes europeos – apoya parte de la cadena de producción de miel en Mozambique, específicamente en el distrito de Sussundenga,

provincia de Manica. El apoyo consiste en desarrollar las capacidades de los grupos locales de productores de miel. Estos grupos son luego organizados en cooperativas, las cuales se convertirían en propietarias del 40 por ciento de las acciones en la empresa de miel de más reciente creación, denominada Mozambique Honey Company (MHC). La iniciativa beneficia fundamentalmente a doce grupos, compuestos por un total de 307 miembros. Se espera que el desarrollo de capacidades emprendido por la iTC se multiplique en otras localidades, dado que logra asegurar mejores prácticas de gestión de recursos naturales, reduciendo los incendios forestales y promoviendo un mejor manejo forestal.