

Short Communication

Awareness Campaign on Beekeeping in Institutions of Learning and Rural Communities in Nigeria: The need for policy intervention

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This paper attempts to highlight the importance of incorporation of improved methods of beekeeping/apiculture in the curricula of institutions of learning in the country, farm training centers of Ministries of Agriculture and its Parastatals, research centers and Non-governmental organisations and other skills acquisition or demonstration centers in the rural and urban communities. The need stemmed from findings of a recent global survey which revealed huge dearth of information on modern methods of bee farming among the academia, public and private agricultural sectors, and the major segments of the societal strata. Having identified the immense profits accruable to this enterprise by several authors across the world, and the huge potentials Nigeria possesses with regards to this farming business, there can be no any other better platform of massive enlightenment than this medium. The efforts made in this awareness will go a long way toward sensitizing both the policymakers of public and private sectors in using this enterprise to solve the issue of massive unemployment in the economy which negative effects served as the major cause of restiveness experienced in Nigeria in recent years. It is strongly hoped that all and sundry should use this farming business as a panacea in stabilizing the economy by heeding the present government's call of diversification of the country's sources of revenue rather than relying solely on crude oil that has attained its diminishing return.

Keywords: Apiculture, awareness, beekeeping, communities, institutions, learning, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Rai and Mauria (2006) described apiculture as the science and culture of honeybees and their management, and in a broad sense include eusocial and solitary bees, their biology, behaviour and entire production, while beekeeping entails rearing of domesticated honeybee species and their management. In other words, apiculture is broader in spectrum and encompasses the study of both domesticated and wild honeybees. However, the two farming systems are mostly interchangeable in

the literature and therefore, could be used so in the context of this study. The issue of profitability of beekeeping as an enterprise has been assessed by several authors across the world (Bradbear, 2004; Ja'afar-Furo et al., 2006; Onyekuru et al., 2010; Abrol, 2011; Mbah, 2012; Esekade et al., 2012; Ghafary, 2015; Anonymous, 2015). In most, if not all submissions, there has been an established consistency that beekeeping in the form of either traditional practice or an improved method/

pollination services is quite worth undertaking in terms of return on investment. But these reports concur on the fact that the improved methods (use of modern beehives/technologies) which are being documented to produce more copious beehive crops have not been popular, or well understood to the larger farming population. These findings abound in the literature, and range from the developed countries like the United States of America (USA) and Europe (Abrol, 2011; Anonymous, 2015), Asia (Ghafary, 2015) and African countries (Bradbear, 2004) which recently include Nigeria (Ja'afar-Furo et al., 2006; Onyekuru et al., 2010; Mbah, 2012; Esekade et al., 2012), among many others. Now, the crux of the matter is that, who are supposed to shoulder the responsibility of spreading the idea of adoption of the improved methods of bee farming across the societal strata in the country? Could it be the research organisations like the Centre for Bee Research and Development (CEBRAD), Ministries of Agriculture (MOA), Universities, or the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), to mention a few? It is strongly believed that it should be a collective responsibility.

To start with, it will be pertinent to suggest the role of the academia which stems from a recent survey (Ja'afar-Furo et al., 2015) conducted late last year (September, 2015) to find out the number of indigenous and international universities that were engaged in taking courses on apiculture or beekeeping, either as a Degree or Diploma Programme. The survey was undertaken on the internet using the Google Scholar and other relevant search engines. To the dismay of the researchers, of the 54 universities studied across the world, only four universities were found to be teaching courses on beekeeping. And of the four universities came a crossed, only one was found to have made an attempt in Nigeria (University of Lagos, on training farmers from an acquired grant). The remaining were two and one in Canada and USA, respectively. That was a clear indication of dearth of knowledge on the subject matter by the institutions of learning, or to say the least, neglect on the part of the academia. For this reason, it will be proper to implore all the institutions of learning right from the primary schools, secondary to tertiary level to liaise with CEBRAD in designing curriculum of learning that would be appropriate for such plane of education to give proper instructions to the younger generation with the broad aim of developing a very

strong beekeeping industry in the very near future. Research centers like CEBRAD should embark on making available appropriate information on improved methods of beekeeping to a very broad spectrum of beneficiaries that cut across both the public and private sectors, as well the rural farming communities that are in the larger majority. Achieving this fit would better be done in conjunction with the MOA that possess the manpower that would link-up with the wider grassroots easily. Having stated this, there is also the need for the research organisations to join efforts with the Universities not only in drafting curricula, but also establishment of full-fledged apiaries of international standards in order to pave way for effective learning. To further buttress this course, the Adamawa State University, Mubi, Nigeria, established a 15-Top-bar beehive in its Technology Village meant for skills acquisition by all interested students and members of the communities. Similarly, the University of Maiduguri, Nigeria, has established an apiary made of Kenya Top-bar beehives in the Department of Forestry and Wildlife nursery for the purpose of promotion of beekeeping in that axis. It is hoped that other universities will make attempts towards this direction.

In the same vein, the MOA, NGOs and the communities through the local community leaders, should work together towards producing synergy that would advance the course of spreading the ideas of application of improved methods of keeping bees nationwide. Specifically, the MOA should deem it appropriate to incorporate packages on apiculture in the Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) and Fadama Development Projects (FDPs) of various states of the federation. This can be made possible by employing the services of their trained agricultural extension officers who are already conversant with the work as changed agents.

Similarly, it is a moral imperative to involve community-based organizations (CBOs) or civil society organizations (CSOs) who are agents of transformation and change in their communities to swiftly engage in the spread of message of beekeeping technology if the campaign is to be lunched. Unequivocally, youth groups, women groups and rural cooperatives should earnestly be brought into lime-line in this campaign. Initiatives should be taken by the concerned institutions, MOA, ADPs, FDPs and Food Security Campaign

Organizations (FSCOs), to involve these groups in the crusade, based on train the trainers' principle. The youths, when trained, can help multiply (transfer) the knowledge of the technologies among peers and consequently, the community at large. Equally, the rural cooperative and women groups which provide services at cost to members can also contribute positively in this same course (beekeeping technology transfer).

Finally, it is advisable to form a very powerful national standing committee composed of influential personalities who have bee farming at heart to coordinate this nationwide campaign by massively utilizing both the print and the electronic media.

It is worthy of note to understand that Nigeria is among the countries that have rich bee plants, if not the richest bee flora in the world. Therefore, there is virtually no reason why Nigeria cannot be in the fore among the nations that export high quality beehive crops. The country has what it takes to do that both in terms of flora and human resources. What it lacks at present is the will to commence that. And the right time is now!

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