



Beekeeping in Africa: site selection for beehives

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Sustainable Development Goals	Industry, innovation and infrastructure and life on land

Summary

This technology describes considerations related to apiary site selection in Africa. An apiary (or bee yard or bee farm) is a place where beehives are kept. Identifying an adequate site for an apiary is the first step to successful installation and colonization of a bee hive. This brief entry gives valuable advice on what to take into consideration when choosing a site for a bee hive. This technology is part of a series on hive management derived from the FAO publication "Beekeeping in Africa".

Description

1. The apiary

An apiary (or bee yard or bee farm) is a place where beehives are kept. In the United States, Canada and Australia. An apiary can contain a hundred or more bee colonies. Where there are plenty of nectariferous trees for bees to enjoy, 100 colonies crowded in a small area can obtain their food supply without any trouble. In Africa, an apiary should contain only about 10 hives per km². Where to locate an apiary sometimes creates problems. It is generally agreed that the beekeeper can make a good living without necessarily becoming a landowner. In Ghana, for example, the Forestry Department is willing to allocate government forest reserves to any group or individual who needs them for keeping bees.

2. Site selection

Owing to the aggressive nature of the African bee, it is not advisable to place hives right on the farm but near it. Around 100 to 200 m away from crops is good. It is important to keep hives away from fertile spots of the farmland. They should be placed on rocks or on the poorest portions of the farm, for which the farmer has little or no other use. Experience has shown that farmers who disobey this important rule sometimes cannot clear the weeds around their trees or crops because of the constant presence of bees. Bees can travel about 3 km to visit a plant. Bees sited about 150 m away from a productive area of the farm will allow labourers to clear weeds, turn the soil and work the crops.

The ideal apiary site should be:

- away from playgrounds and noisy commercial or industrial areas;
- near a fresh water supply: the banks of a river, lake or fish-pond, or even a dripping faucet;
- near food sources, e.g. citrus, avocado, coconut, palm, cola, shea butter, neem or *eucalyptus* plantation, waste area or marsh land;
- fairly dry, away from swampy or flooding valley or any bottom land with



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stagnant water (humid areas promote fungal diseases and prevent proper honey curing);

- accessible to good roads;
- on the leeward side of a hill, with rainfall not exceeding 1 250 mm a year; and
- away from smoke and fire, danger of vandalism and unfriendly neighbours.

3. Agro-ecological zones

- Tropics, warm

4. Related/associated technologies

- Beekeeping in Africa: traditional and modern beehives and beekeeping equipment: 7273.
- Beekeeping in Africa: installation of bee hives (with particular focus on the top bar hive): 7291.
- Beekeeping in Africa: colonization of a bee hive: 7324.
- Beekeeping in Africa: colony management II. dividing, uniting and feeding a colony: 7326.
- Beekeeping in Africa: colony management III. Record keeping and nest control: 7327.
- Beekeeping in Africa: colony management I. examining the colony and controlling swarming: 7328.

- Beekeeping in Africa. honey harvesting: 7329
- Beekeeping in Africa: honey and bee wax extraction: 7330.
- Beekeeping in Africa: using bees for pollination: 7331.
- Beekeeping in Africa: responding to common bee diseases: 7332.
- Beekeeping in Africa: choosing and rearing a queen: 7333.

5. Objectives fulfilled by the project

5.1 Resource use efficiency

This technology provides improved apiculture management and better colony health.

5.2 Pro-poor technology

With improved management and improved bee colony health, this technology provides beekeepers with additional income and a source of food through improved and improved quality of products such as honey.