Honey and Honey by- Product Enterprises, The Gambia Compiled by Kanimang Camara Director NACO Gambia

Opportunities, Challenges and General Options:

The future of the Bee Keeping Enterprises managed by Community Forest Committees (CFCs) are very promising, considering its profit margin, high level of commitment of the Product Based Interest Groups (IGs) members, and support from the CFCs and the Village Development Committees (VDCs). With the introduction of Market Analysis and Development (MA&D) Approach since 2000, the enterprises persistent position are towards reducing pressure on the forest resources while creating economic incentives and benefits to the entire communities. However, the instability of the national currency in relation to foreign currencies has an impact on the buying power of the customers affecting the net projected returns of the National Bee Keepers Association of The Gambia (NBAG). Also the price of the raw materials / additives that are used for the production of soap and body creams from wax fluctuates according to the exchange rate.

The enterprises’ decision making processes is based on a consensual negotiation process; IG members present their action plans to the CFCs, in turn the CFCs forwards the overall environmental priority areas to the VDC for review, approval and implementation. Upon approval the required funds for implementing the plans are allocated to the IG members via the CFCs for implementation.

Risks faced by the enterprises and strategies adopted are summarized below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risks</th>
<th>Strategies adopted</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Un- Controlled Forest fires</td>
<td>• Clearing of fire breaks</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cleaning periphery of hive stands</td>
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<td>• Conduct controlled early</td>
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burning.

| Theft of raw honey and in order instances Hives | Frequent patrolling of forest area.  
| Termite/ pest infestation of the Hive stands | Use of rituals  
| | Frequent inspection and application of cow dung on the hive stands.  
| | Use of old vehicle tyres  

Internal and external challenges of the enterprises are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal challenges</th>
<th>External challenges</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Protection of the area against un-controlled forest fires.</td>
<td>• Sustainability of NBAG’s activities as an umbrella body.</td>
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<td>• Protection of hives against theft and pest outbreaks.</td>
<td>• Unfair competition between illegal and legal producers of honey.</td>
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<td>• Building the capacity of IG members to explore other business ideas in adding value to wax.</td>
<td>• Negative climatic impacts (drought)</td>
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<td>• Packaging and labeling of products</td>
<td>• Access to micro-finance credit at reasonable interest rates</td>
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<td>• Inadequate information about the enterprises</td>
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Some of the key opportunities for the enterprises in the future include the following;

- Increased production capacity through the procurement of additional hives;
- Acquisition of legal ownership status over the remaining forest cover to establish more hives;
- Availability of local skills on bee farming;
- Capacity building of individual bee farmers for improved production and income earning capacities of community members and
- Change of wooden hive stands to metal or concrete.

The contribution of Honey and Honey by-products enterprises in sustaining community livelihoods are:
- Provision of social services to supplement Government’s effort;
- Build capacities of individuals on entrepreneurial skills through technological transfer;
- Create employment opportunities for forest dependent communities; and
• Enhance Sustainable Forest Management through the creation of economic benefits and incentives for participants.

In conclusion, Government Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations and Community Based Organizations supporting the development of Honey based enterprises should facilitate the following:
• Support capacity building programmes for local entrepreneurs;
• Link local entrepreneurs to micro-finance service and support providers;
• Help communities to secure long term tenure over the land and forest to guarantee communal ownership over the resources;
• Continuously create enabling policy environments for the effective operation of the enterprises (tax incentives);
• Support Government efforts to meet the policy goals targeted for the Forestry Sub Sector;
• Facilitate Regional experience sharing workshops for small-scale forest-based entrepreneurs; and
• The National Authorities should enforce forest regulations alongside health regulations to reduce illegal and unfair competition in the markets.

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