

World Bee Day 2022: "Honey for Hope"

Date: Friday, 20 May 2022

Time: 11:00 – 13:00 Geneva (CEST)

Venue: Palais des Nations, Building H, Lobby

Background

For centuries bees, among the hardest working creatures on the planet, have benefited people, plants and the environment. By carrying pollen from one flower to another, bees and other pollinators enable not only the production of an abundance of fruits, nuts and seeds, but also more variety and better quality, contributing to food security and nutrition.

Bees provide a critical link in the maintenance of ecosystems, pollination. They play a major role in maintaining biodiversity, ensuring the survival of many plants, enhancing forest regeneration, providing sustainability and adaptation to climate change and improving the quality and quantity of agricultural production systems. In fact, close to 75 percent of the world's crops that produce fruits and seeds for human consumption depend, at least in part, on pollinators for sustained production, yield and quality.

Beekeeping, also called apiculture, refers to all activities concerned with the practical management of social bee species. The benefits of beekeeping have been well documented over the years; keeping bees can support the economy and food production. As we entered the decade dramatically marred by the multitude of crises, including rising on hunger, the increased impact of climate change, conflicts and the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, many of these benefits may have become even clearer.

Following three years of efforts at the international level, the UN Member States unanimously approved a UN General Assembly resolution, proclaiming 20 May as World Bee Day back in 2017. The World Bee Day raises awareness among the international public about the importance of bees and other pollinators for humanity in the light of food security, the global elimination of hunger, and care for the environment and biodiversity.

On the occasion of the 5th World Bee Day, the International Geneva will join the observance and celebrate these hard-working pollinators. Join us on 20 May 2022 at 11.00 at the Palais de Nations (Building H, Lobby) to explore the potentials of beekeeping in times of crisis.

Programme

20 May 2022, Building H Lobby & Ariana Park, Palais des Nations

11.00 Part I – Welcome Remarks and Webinar Session "Honey for Hope"

Welcome to the World Bee Day

- Ms Tatiana Valovaya, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva
- Ambassador Anita Pipan, Permanent Representative of Slovenia in Geneva
- Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland in Geneva
- Mr Dominique Burgeon, Director of FAO Liaison Office with the United Nations in Geneva

Honey for Hope - project presentations

Beekeeping is an excellent option for rural livelihood diversification, helping alleviate poverty, protect biodiversity and support food security. It also plays a critical role in humanitarian context. From communities affected by the impact of climate change from floods to drought and reduced rainfall affected areas to regions in conflicts and post-conflict, beekeeping activities are improving overall quality of living of people. Most vulnerable rural farming households benefit from development cooperation projects that are providing an inclusive and reliable source of income and diversification employment opportunities through beekeeping farming. These projects have targeted particularly women, youth and persons with disabilities, who are among the most vulnerable in regions facing humanitarian challenges. This session of the webinar brings some extraordinary cases of concrete examples of the role of beekeeping to ensuring that families regain their livelihoods despite conflict situations is key to ensuring food security and self-reliance.

- FAO project: ***Smallholder Agricultural Productivity Enhancement Programme (SAPEP) supporting beekeepers in Yemen***
- Slovenia's Development Cooperation & ITF project in Bosnia and Herzegovina: ***Beekeeping as empowerment tool for people with disabilities from Bosnia and Herzegovina***

Introduction to the Biodiversity in Ariana Park

12.00 Part II – Ariana Park, Palais des Nations

"Introduction to Apiculture" with the UNOG ground keepers and a professional beekeeper – educational walk in Ariana Park where participants will learn more about beekeeping, role of bees in maintaining biodiversity.

"Appetizers & Slovenian and Swiss Honey Tasting"

Evening Part III – Illumination of the emblematic Jet d'eau

"Jet d'Eau shines in Yellow", to close the World Bee Day celebrations, the historic landmark of Geneva will be lit in yellow on the evening of 20 May 2022.

Background on World Bee Day

On 20 December 2017, following three years of efforts at the international level, the UN Member States unanimously approved a UN General Assembly resolution, **proclaiming 20 May as World Bee Day**.

The UN General Assembly proclamation was a result of cooperation between the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association, the Republic of Slovenia and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the widespread European and wider international support of countries and organisations, including Apimondia (International Federation of Beekeepers' Associations).

The main purpose of World Bee Day is to **raise awareness among the international public about the importance of bees and other pollinators** for humanity in the light of food security, the global elimination of hunger, and care for the environment and biodiversity.

Food security

In order to be able to feed the world's growing population, we need ever more food, which must be diverse, balanced and of good quality to ensure the progress and well-being of humankind. Bees are renowned for their role in providing high-quality food (honey, royal jelly and pollen) and other products used in healthcare and other sectors (beeswax, propolis, honey bee venom). But the work of bees entails much more! The greatest contribution of bees and other pollinators is the pollination of nearly three quarters of the plants that produce 90% of the world's food. A third of the world's food production depends on bees, i.e. every third spoonful of food depends on pollination. **Without bees, our food security is at risk.**

Sustainable farming and income

Over the past 50 years, the amount of crops that depend on pollinators (i.e. fruit, vegetables, seeds, nuts and oilseeds) has tripled. Bees play an important role in relation to the scope of agricultural production. Effective pollination increases the amount of agricultural produce, improves their quality and enhances plants' resistance to pests. Cultivated plants that depend on pollination are an important source of income to farmers, especially smaller farmers and family-owned farms in developing countries.

They provide jobs and income to millions of people. Furthermore, agricultural plants that require pollination are an important source of jobs and income for farmers, especially small farmers and family-owned farms in developing countries. Sustainable agricultural practices are extremely important for the bees themselves as bees face many challenges today, from intensive agriculture, to improper use of pesticides, to habitat loss, to climate change and the interactions of these. **Without bees, a large part of the global food production chains is at risk.**

Biodiversity

There are over 20,000 species of bee that exist globally. Native bees have co-evolved with our unique native flora over thousands of years. They are vital for the preservation of ecological balance and biodiversity in nature. They provide one of the most recognisable ecosystem services, i.e. pollination, which is what makes food production possible. By doing so, they protect and maintain ecosystems as well as animal and plant species, and contribute to genetic and biotic diversity. Maintaining plant diversity supports other essential ecosystem services including helping to regulate climate, purify air and water, build soil and recycle nutrients. **Without bees, biodiversity is at risk.**

Environmental protection

Bees also act as indicators of the state of the environment. Their presence, absence or quantity tells us when something is happening with the environment and that appropriate action is needed. By observing the development and health of bees, it is possible to ascertain changes in the environment and implement the necessary precautionary measures in time.

Some species of plant can only be pollinated by a particular species of bee. In the absence of pollination, the plant species cannot reproduce so if that bee species dies, so too will the plant. **Without bees, our environment is at risk.**

Why 20 May?

The date of the World Bee Day was selected as a birthday of the great bee expert from the 18th century, Anton Janša. Janša was the first bee-keeping teacher in the court of the Habsburg Empress Maria Theresa. By introducing bee-keeping methods that were successfully used by Carniolan bee-keepers, he caused a real revolution in bee-keeping of the time. Among other things, he introduced honey flow, re-defined the role of drones, and wrote all of his findings in two books, which are still a useful manual for many bee-keepers.