

More money from honey by-products.....

Introduction

The Highlands team of SNV Cameroon, whilst working with the Western Highlands Conservation Network (WHINCONET) on a 3 year capacity building exercise, identified the honey sector as a potential value chain for sustainable development. A marketing analysis in 2005 of the economic potential of NTFPs used by WHINCONET members and their communities showed honey in the top three, along with a medicinal tree - *Prunus africana*, and eco-tourism. Realising the complete lack of market data in Cameroon, and using a model from SNV Zambia, SNV commissioned a Honey Market Study in 2006 of the status of Highlands honey in Cameroon and abroad, executed by UGIPROMNAD an Ngaoundal based union of honey producers with support from a UK honey importer Tropical Forest Products. Honey collection and processing is an ancient and well-established activity in Cameroonian forest and savannah communities. Producers have focussed on exploiting local markets for honey, rather than developing alternative markets. Bees wax has seen limited development as the quantity of extracted wax produced is far beyond local consumption as a main ingredient in candles, body creams, ointments, lotions, soaps and polishes. It was revealed from the study that bee farmers had stock piles of wax gathering dust in the last five years ago, de-motivating bee farmers whose wax production efforts were not rewarded with additional income. Furthermore, bee farmers were less interested in by-product extraction as they had no knowledge of markets and only limited knowledge of transformation possibilities.

Honey:

Beekeeping is an ancient and well-established activity in Cameroonian forest and savannah communities. Honey is used as an energy-rich food and is prized for its medicinal value. Beekeeping has an important ecological aspect as a pollinator and environmental aspect being one of the major *Non Timber Forest Products* (NTFP) in the highland and savannah areas of Cameroon, as sustainable beekeeping reinforces forestation, good forest management and provides an alternative livelihood to activities such as hunting. Honey is traditionally collected from the wild and consumed unprocessed,



and in the last 20 years bee-keepers have become more professional, organising into groups, training with support from mainly conservation and development organisations and slowly diversifying the range of honey and bee products. Honey and bee products have high value to weight value and are growing in importance as cash "crops", providing a secondary, small but significant source of income, particularly for women and for families with no access to agricultural or timber markets. One beehive in Cameroon can generate enough money, from the production and sale of honey and wax, for annual school fees. Wax is used in the food, cosmetics and pharmaceutical industries - and is a potential export product - with specialist markets such as the organic sector in Europe and USA being important. The UK, Netherlands and Germany are major importers. Competitors include China, Australia, Latin and South American countries. Honey production in Cameroon is estimated in 2001, at 1.2 million tonnes. In 2007 honey production from the Highlands is estimated at nearly 2 million litres, from 200,000 beehives, 49 hives being the average, with a range from 1 or 2 to hundreds per person or group. The average production honey/beehive/year is 15 Kg, mainly in the Northwest, West, Southwest and Adamoua provinces. Average honey prices wholesale/retail are 1,100 CFA (2€) per litre. Total value of honey market - at producer level - is 2000 million CFA. At least 61 tonnes of wax produced a year, probably higher but not reported, Average selling price of wax is 2400 CFA per kg. Total value of honey - at producer level - is 62 million CFA . Many business are diversifying- such as creams, candles, ointments, etc - up to 15 products derived form honey and bees have been identified

Markets: WHINCONET lobbied with SNV and organisations such as PECTEN Cameroon to disseminate the results of the Honey Marketing Study, at a first-of-its kind national Honey Marketing Forum held in November 2006. Recommendations from stakeholders at the Forum led to SNV, in partnership with support agencies such as INADES, CERUT and CIPCRE, to increase assistance to producers and exporters to organise and formalise themselves into associations. It also led to successful resource mobilisation from the European Commission for FAO, SNV, ICRAF and CIFOR to select honey as one of the sectors in a program to build small and medium enterprises in NTFP sector.

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Utilising the findings and contacts made during the Market Study and realising the profitable potential for exports of beeswax to Europe, where there is a high demand for good quality wax, the pioneering GIC Guide D'Espoir ventured into the export of honey and wax. Honey exports to the EU require stringent controls, so for this aspect, work is in progress to put in place a residue monitoring plan for Cameroonian honey. Beeswax is free from the such controls, and the development of exports to the EU was more easily undertaken by the GIC. The first export to Germany and the UK from Cameroon of 40 tonnes of wax included nearly one ton that had accumulated in the Northwest for over five years, without apparent an market, was successfully achieved in November 2007. International markets in the US and Europe are now being activity approached, with support from the Cameroonian government in setting up the required regulatory and policy systems, supported by SNV and partners such as FAO. The profile of honey and bee products is being raised by producers and successions for setting up systems of market information, consumer awareness and quality standards are in full swing. In a sector with no regulations and little previous government intervention, SNV and FAO are now working together to assist determining up of quality standards and setting up systems for export, bringing together the Ministry of Livestock, exporters and laboratories.

Impact! SNV Advisers with GIC D'Espoir beeswax candle



Impacts:

Honey & Bee Products, ANCO Bamenda



Incomes; The 40 tonnes of wax, sold for approximately 1500 CFA provided income for at about 50 households in the Oku area and around 1000 farmers in Ngaoundal. Prices for wax have remained stable, but increases are expected as the market develops. Harmonisation in prices across the country is, as awareness rises and demand and supply disparities reduce due to producers making more contact with suppliers. This maybe partially attributed to the lobby activities of Whinconet members and actions of the larger actors in the sector.

Production: Levels of wax and honey production appear to be increasing, although this is difficult to quantify given

the baseline was only established in 2006. Wax sales have increased, particularly due to GIC Guide d'Espoir's export and it's expected that further exports will be made. It is expected that producers will diversity and increased transformation will occur.

Employment: Statistics for employment were collected for the first time in 2006. Anecdotal data indicate an increase in employment and a professionalisation of the sector, as at least four organisations have emerged in the last two years dedicated to honey marketing and export. In 2006 around 30,000 beefarmers were known. In 2007, probably mainly due at least due to better data, 200,000 beekeepers organised into at least 64 small & medium enterprises.

Sustainability; Agroforestry organisations and research institutes such as IRAD have been involved in promoting bee loving tree species and disseminating information on how to have "win-win" between conservation, reforestation and honey production. Links have now been made with research institutes such as the University of Dschang to further disseminate experiences.

Social inclusion; SNV's activities are targeting women and ethnic minority groups, such as Fulani and Mbororo. They have both an interest and strong sustainability reasons for being actively involved in honey production, due problems of land degradation, bush fires in grazing lands and a desire to increasing women's economic activities. Activities to train Mbororo Beefarmers in the Ngoketunjia division by WHINCONET members FAP, supported by the FGF, a SNV-DFID program, in beekeeping have so far been well received.

Challenges: SNV's learnt that access to new markets is a slow and continual process. Market dynamics change and actors enter in and out. Client selection is therefore extremely important for the medium term. Especially the choice of where to focus in a market chain is critical. An easy option is to work mainly with producers who are typically civil society community groups, rather than the more entrepreneurial end of chain processors, exporters and retailers. These organisations though can have significant impact on producers and increases in production and value adding: SNV's challenge is to ensure equity of income generation and distribution amongst the chain.