



MedBEEsinessHubs Project C_A.1.2_0035

OUTPUT 6.1 Policy document incorporating the Bee economy concept in European and national policies

Activity 6.1.1 The MedBee economy concept in mainstream policies for rural development through the CAP

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Policy document incorporating the Bee economy concept in European and national policies – Consolidated report

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MedBEEsinessHubs–C_A.1.2_0035

WP6: Strategic dissemination and policy making

O6.1 Policy document incorporating the Bee economy concept in European and national policies

Responsible Partner: PP1 - Filagrotiki Symvouleftiki Ltd

Introductory Note on Deliverable

This document is a consolidation report of the five regional policy suggestion reports prepared and submitted for each region participating in the project.

The Activities related to this report preparation are:

- Review all 5 Policy Documents prepared by the partner regions A6.1.1
- Review, in line with the policy documents, the Reports of Current situation A3.1.1
- Identify similarities, differences and key policy issues between EU and non-EU regions.
- Participate in the final conference in Cagliari to grasp information on the consolidation approach.
- Compile Consolidated report.

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Introduction & Problem identification

This report aims to consolidate the reports on policy suggestions provided by the partner regions. In terms of the overall environmental issue pertaining the concept of honeybees and pollinators, the following findings are relevant both at the EU and the Med areas level:

- (a) In 2016, the global assessment of the status of pollinators¹ concluded that wild pollinators are decreasing under the increasing threat from human activity, including climate change. A 2019 worldwide assessment report on insects² confirmed a negative trend in the number of insects in general, with over 40 % of insect species threatened with extinction.
- (b) According to a report published by the European Court of Auditors³, “Wild pollinators in the EU are declining in abundance and diversity under the increasing threat from human activity, in particular conversion to intensive agriculture and the use of pesticides and fertilisers.
- (c) The regional beekeeping sector plays an important role in protecting local biodiversity through the pollination process.
- (d) In the Med regions, substantial urbanization and increased pest control have affected the bee populations. As the Lebanese report concludes, “A significant decline was reported by many beekeepers in the average annual yield of honey per colony from 1990 till now, which is a great challenge for beekeeping industry. This decline in honey yield per colony can be attributed to many factors, the most important of which are scarcity of bee forage due to the evolution of urbanization or the overgrazing by small ruminants mainly at high mountains and overstocking honeybee colonies above the carrying capacity of available forage area. As a result, beekeepers are subjected to low financial returns from their honeybee colonies’. This finding is widely applicable across all the Med regions.

The common & different characteristics of the honeybee sectors EU Vs non-EU-Med regions

At European and the Med-region the following characteristics are common in terms of the beekeeping sector:

- (a) The beekeeping sector continues to be characterized by the diversity of production conditions and yields, and the heterogeneity of economic operators, both in terms of production and marketing.
- (b) The high percentage of non-professional beekeepers and the small average number of colonies per beekeeper are common features - in particular, the sector is characterized by an extremely variable level of professionalism, ranging from specialized companies to farms where Beekeeping is an integrative activity and involves many small producers, with a widespread distribution throughout the region.
- (c) The predominant production activity is the production of honey and no other relevant bee products. Other bee productions are still of little relevance, and pollen and royal jelly production remains practically marginal, still relegated to occasional production.

¹ IPBES, “The assessment report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services on pollinators, pollination and food production”, 2016.

² Sanchez-Bayo F., A.G. Wyckhuys K. “Worldwide decline of the entomofauna: A review of its drivers”, 31 January 2019.

³ European Court of Auditors, “Protection of wild pollinators in the EU — Commission initiatives have not borne fruit”

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- (d) There is a low propensity for cooperation, so it is believed that technical assistance and training may represent an opportunity to highlight the advantages of belonging to associated forms.
 - (e) Hive nomadism deserves special consideration, given both its importance in beekeeping practice and, more generally, for the pollination of cultivated and wild species.
 - (f) Competition from foreign products that arrive in the national borders with prices that are decidedly lower than those within the country.
 - (g) The EU as well as all regions does not produce enough money to cover demand. Furthermore, in all regions the import of cheap honey or honey imitations is a key issue affecting the economic viability of beekeepers.

The most important differences noted among the EU and the partner Med regions relates to the weak legislative framework governing the sector in terms of funding instruments supporting the beekeeping activity. The EU through the CAP has a clear funding instrument supporting the bee sector, albeit small and inadequate to support the sector. Furthermore, it has laid down support tools for farmers to protect biodiversity, which indirectly support the honeybee flora.

Conversely, in the non-EU med regions such funding instruments are not explicitly practised either to support the beekeepers or the biodiversity from farming activities.

The conclusions reached from the review of the current policies, prove that the total expenditure devoted to the honeybee sector through the Apiculture program in the EU and other [programs in partner regions, is quite small and focuses on specific problems of the beekeeping practise, not on the wider concept of the honeybee as an economic activity for sustainable development. Anyone interested to become engaged in the processing and marketing of honeybee products has to use other (horizontal) policy measures which are usually competitive and demand high investments in processing equipment and infrastructures. Bearing in mind that the majority of beekeepers are very small in size and practise beekeeping as a secondary occupation for additional family income, these horizontal measures in the processing and marketing of honeybee products are not targeted to this group of people. Furthermore, the need for a different legislative framework for the handcrafting of food products is essential, an issue that is pending for the past three (at least) years at the Cypriot parliament and with the National Authorities.

In policy making, beekeeping needs to be considered as an important 'sideline activity' for regional growth. Hence, apiculture and related trades can be sources of valuable economic strength to countless numbers of rural people's livelihoods. Hence policy making must not focus on beekeeping as a productive activity that can safeguard food security (as with other sectors) but as a policy for rural economic growth through diversification of incomes.

An overall conclusion reached that relates to all regions:

Beekeeping helps in supporting the incomes of a big number of families in rural regions especially as a side activity. Beekeeping is not an agricultural activity as other farming activities, for it affects a large number of people through its part-time additional income function. Hence it should not be treated as an agricultural economic function in isolation but as a tool for rural development that is dependent on sustainable environmental practices.

Current policies at partner regions

Cyprus & Sardegna:

In line with previous programs, support for apiculture for the period 2023-27 is provided under the new CAP strategic plans. Member States can choose from seven types of interventions in Article 55 of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115, listed below which carry over from previous measures under the CMO Regulation and further broadens the scope of the support provided. The main objective of the programmes is to improve the general conditions for producing and marketing apiculture products in the EU but in setting up their apiculture interventions from 2023-2027 under the strategic plan, Member States must pursue at least one of the specific objectives of the CAP (Article 6(1) of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115). In Sardegna (Italy) the instrument of most immediate access to public financial resources for beekeepers is the Regional Beekeeping Sub-Program, for the current 2023-27 programming period.

The interventions include,

- (a) Technical assistance to beekeepers and beekeepers' organisations.
- (b) Combating beehive invaders and diseases, particularly varroasis.
- (c) Rationalisation of transhumance.
- (d) Measures to support laboratories for the analysis of apiculture products with the aim of helping beekeepers to market and increase the value of their products.
- (e) Measures to support the restocking beehives.
- (f) Cooperation with specialised bodies for the implementation of applied research programmes in the field of beekeeping and apiculture products.
- (g) Market monitoring.
- (h) Enhancement of product quality with a view to exploiting the potential of products on the market.

Another important measure of support noted for Italy is the interventions financed through LEADER do not only concern farms and the agri-food chain, but also include initiatives aimed at handicrafts, rural tourism, the improvement of local services and the creation of networks for the valorisation of territories rural areas, paying particular attention to youth and female entrepreneurship.

Although not mentioned, the same policy of the LEADER program is applicable to Cyprus since this policy tool favours cooperation among local stakeholders, a tool that is closer to the concepts of the MEDbeebusinesshubs project.

Non-Eu regions

The legislative framework covers a wide area of beekeeping activity such as,

- Honey product trading requirements
- Standard for honey
- Good health of the apiaries

and to some extent, policies that aim to preserve biodiversity such as the Lebanese policy on Investment and export of *Origanum syriacum* and *Salvia fruticose* that aims to maintain the bee flora.

However, most policies seem to be based on a weak implementation framework and have a rather regulatory character rather than being incentives to support specific activities.

Several 'holistic' approaches are noted such as the "Draft law organizing beekeeping sector in Lebanon" and the "Palestinian Honeybee Council" but as it is mentioned in the Lebanese report "The lack of policies and the absence of a clear vision of the sector's future is decelerating this movement'.

Elsewhere in the Palestinian report it is revealed that coordination between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Environmental Quality Authority are very weak or absent regarding biodiversity, and the distribution of hives as well as in their role in preserving biodiversity. Additionally, there is an absence of clear data from the Ministry of Economy on the production related to the bee sector.

Support policies both in the EU and the non-EU areas do not take into consideration that "At least 80% of the beekeeper's community (in Egypt) consider beekeeping to be a family business, and veteran beekeepers say that the beekeeping industry is inherited, not taught. This statement is general characteristic of the bee sector across all regions that does not receive proper attention in policy development.

The Medbusinesshubs project – lessons learnt & good practises.

The Medbusinesshubs project aims to protect the bees, managed and wild, by taking a different approach from that of existing policies that stems from the notion of creating local economies that depend on the bees, thereby aligning individual incomes with the necessity to protect the bees and lead to a result of preserving biodiversity as a source of economic wellbeing. To achieve this objective, the project has undertaken several good practises at the level of pilot implementation, as noted in all reports and summarised below.

Defining a strategy using a sound bottom-up approach and creating a regional cluster: Alongside the micro grants support to the micro SMEs at the individual level, the project focuses in creating networks of cooperation among beekeepers at the regional level. These networks aim to bring in farmers and other service providers as well as local community authorities, in order to create a brand on which all the people will be dependent on. A very specific methodology has been utilised in the project in order to achieve a well organised cluster. A Social Democratic dialogue was the initial step for identifying the potential of creating a brand for a specific region and then further training activities were organised to support the formation of the brand at the regional level. These methodological approaches are essential when trying to organise people of any rural community around the concept of the honeybee production and its related products.

Training in activities that go beyond technical beekeeping subjects: The project has organised training programmes which have covered all the subjects associated with beekeeping and honey processing & marketing activities. It is important to note that issues of business organisation, marketing and consumer behaviour are key constituents for a successful beekeeping activity that are most often ignored in the apiculture programs, certainly being the case with the Cypriot program.

Provision of micro-grants: On a pilot scale, the project has launched the subgrants facility which was aimed directly to meet the demands of the micro-SMEs working in beekeeping activities. The subgrants eligibility of expenses focused more on improvements for processing and marketing of honey bee products in an effort to improve the position of beekeepers and honeybee processors both in the marketing of their products as well as their ability to act as tourism providers.

Cross border cooperation: A cross border approach in cluster development can provide the internationalisation of the concept of brand building for regional development based on the honeybee and its products. This is an important aspect for achieving the global visibility of regions that create long term sustainable places thereby attracting visitors and tourists at a faster pace.

Clustering beekeepers and beekeepers' cooperation as the key to success. In these clusters, groups, cooperatives, syndicates they can cooperate and exchange expertise and knowledge for better practices.

Working on consumers knowledge to enhance the honey culture was also one of the recommendations to boost the sector and the marketing of beehive products and to improve the bee economy concept. This work on consumer knowledge could be more efficient through the introduction of the bee eco-routes and the bee tourism concept, thus the work is in progress to design few Eco bees-routes in the country.

Some trainings focusing on diversifying the beehive products their interest in the therapy and their processing into high value products, such as cosmetics, sweets, chocolate bar, candies, a new approach in beekeeping support tools. Similarly, in the Palestinian report it is noted that 'it is

necessary to adopt economic agricultural policies based on the concept of product diversification and finding a mechanism for marketing them’.

The bee economy concept recognises that,

- beekeeping can provide substantial secondary income to people of rural areas and become a valuable source of prosperity,
- bees, their ecosystem and their products can blend well to create a destination brand thereby increasing the local economy’s capabilities to diversify,
- in an economy where most people depend on the honeybee its products and its ecosystems, the need to impose pollinator friendly policies is substituted with society’s will to preserve a valuable source of income that sustains their livelihoods.

Therefore, the concept of the bee economy in which local people are dependent economically on beekeeping and selling honeybee products is a self-regulated system for environmental sustainability in rural development policies.

Indeed, European policies that support agricultural practises with respect to the environment are always in place but seldom work efficiently because intensive agriculture is the key driver for economic growth. While organic farming practises safeguard the environmental stability in many countries, they are not linked to apiculture as a form of regional economic asset.

Hence can we make beekeeping and the sale of honeybee products the most important economic activity in a region? Can we turn beekeeping and other honeybee activities a major part of the tourism industry of a particular region? Can a particular region (a village or cluster of villages) be absolutely dependent on the brand of the honeybee for its economic growth?

The MedBusinessHubs project worked in a specific methodology to help towards the creation of the bee economy concept. This methodology requires policies that target on three directions:

- At the individual microSME beekeeper and processor of honeybee products
- At a regional level in terms of creating networks and synergies among producers and other economic actors
- At the local community and regional tourism authorities to establish a brand, by creating public areas that promote the honeybee and by promoting and supporting the intangible asset of brand building.

These three axes of action can help towards the formulation of distinct policies for a holistic approach in achieving an economic model based on the concept of the bee economy. However, the starting point of any effort towards a bee economy lies in a public will of a change, an issue that can be best addressed by a public consultation through the methodology of a structured democratic dialogue, as demonstrated in the Medbusinesshubs project.

The bee economy concept may also be summed up in the following quotes from the reports submitted at regional level:

Palestine: What distinguishes the grants within the project framework is their flexibility in terms of embracing ideas. All available ideas for secondary beekeeping products were accommodated, in addition to a focus on environmentally friendly community-based bee trail tourism.

Numerous fantastic ideas emerged within the context of the call for project grants. Projects ranged from those cantered around eco-tourism for bee trails to child-friendly initiatives aimed at raising

awareness about the importance of consuming honey and beekeeping derivatives. These ideas emerged after the vocational and technical training sessions provided within the project, which enhanced the beneficiaries' understanding and skills.

Policy suggestions

Policy suggestions have predominantly focused on five areas, putting great emphasis on the concepts of cluster & cooperation as well as in dragging tourism into the bee economy concept.

The following policy suggestions are hereby noted in brief, aiming to provide some initial thoughts in ways to capitalise on the concept of the bee economy and the examples cited by the Medbusinesshubs project.

Across all partner regions beekeeping and the honeybee sector represent economic activities that are not comparative to other agricultural sectors of the economy. This observation comes as a side point to the fact that beekeeping across all regions is a part time activity which supports additional family income in rural communities.

The beekeeping activity, in regional, national and EU policies is not seen as an important driver of growth based on the value it provides to the agricultural sector through pollination. Therefore, its value to the local ecosystem and its central role as a driver for sustainable economic growth is taken for granted in policy development both in the European Union and in the Mediterranean regions participating in this project.

Policies are focused in improving the quality of honey and reducing the dangers of bee diseases. However, in terms of marketing and promotion of products, limited activity seems to be taking place in terms of policy development. Furthermore, beekeeping and the concept of a holistic approach as displayed in the Medbusinesshubs project is non-existent. Therefore, policies on the bee sector are focused predominantly on improving the competitiveness of the individual beekeepers rather than supporting communities towards rural development and economic prosperity.

The concept of the bee economy looks on the activity of beekeeping from the perspectives of social and environmental importance and incorporates the concept of regional branding for tourism development as an alternative source of rural development.

	Micro-Funding	Training	Institutional	Cluster Formation	Bee tourism
Cyprus	Provide microfinance to beekeepers for investments in equipment facilities and marketing activities to improve competitiveness and create an attractive place for visitors.	Support training sessions on actions to protect pollinators from agricultural practices		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support, through financial subsidies, cluster formation as a tool for rural development through cooperation actions which aim to create a common brand across a cluster of villages. • Provide additional incentives for growers in a designated bee-economy cluster to manage a minimum number of beehives and/or maintain 'solidarity bee hotels • Cluster top-up incentive eg in the form of direct payments 	Provide incentives to the local communities to create and preserve honeybee parks and trails.
Palestine	Increase farmers' and beekeepers' awareness on the importance of bees in the farming system, pollination, increasing productivity and preserving biodiversity strategically, as well as seasonally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the coordination and interactions between various bodies and ministries, to integrate the beekeeping sector within the strategic plans related to biodiversity in West Bank • Increase the allocated budget for the responsible centers • Institutionalization the work of the beekeeping sector to be effective in terms of the mechanisms to protect the sector • Addressing the gaps that allow importers to manipulate products as sweeteners and market them in the market as honey, which creates unfair competition with Palestinian honey. • Activating the Palestinian Honeybee Council and passing a law that stipulates a budget allocation to the council so that it can work more effectively. 		Promotion of honeybee products in regional specialized products that are specific to each region, (GI) village or city, through hiking routes or trips organized in terms of domestic tourism or even tourism that attracts tourists from abroad. Therefore, Palestinian apiaries will become part of the stations of tourist tracks or trips, which contributes significantly to the marketing of apiaries products directly to tourists. Shed light on apiary products, such as honey and derivatives of the beekeeping sector as products to be highlighted within media materials that promote tourism in West Bank. Introduce beeswax lighting candles, taking in consideration that it is not possible to replace paraffin wax candles completely, because the cost of beeswax is high, compared to paraffin wax. Focus on processing national natural beeswax, as there are local experts in this field, and vast quantities of wax in West Bank that can be used in other products.	
Lebanon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide high level training programs for beekeepers in order to establish the concept of Integrated Beekeeping Practices (IBP) that helps beekeepers to produce high quality diversified products while establishing the concept of traceability to increase trust and ease marketing issues. 			Set a policy to provide subsidies for Beekeepers and beekeepers cooperatives to organize honey festivals in their villages and regions to boost beehive products marketing.	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set a policy plan to introduce an educational program for young students in school to show them the importance of the bees and the beekeeping sector with the hope of influencing their parents. 			
Egypt	IFAD grants: Global and regional grants fund innovative responses to rural and agricultural challenges being faced by several partner countries. These grants are driven by thematic and regional corporate-level strategic priorities for partnership, research, policy engagement and capacity-building.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of a cluster of decision & policy makers who will interact and create bigger Bee Economies on Med scale- Bee Regional Centres Best practices regarding- Pollination Gardens-Bee Parks & themed nature trails Med Bee Festivals at World Bee Day to be hosted each year at a different country, Cross border cooperation of voluntary groups working on environmental issues and community service projects