

STATUS OF BEEKEEPING IN KERALA, INDIA

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Kerala State was contributing a major share of honey produced in India till 1990s. The Indian honey bee *Apis cerana indica* was used for commercial beekeeping in the State. The catastrophic outbreak of a dreadful disease to Indian honeybees wiped out 95 per cent of the then existed bee colonies leading to near decimation of commercial beekeeping in the State. The All India Co-ordinated Research Project (AICRP) on Honeybees and Pollinators has developed TSBV tolerant nucleus colonies of Indian honeybee *A. cerana indica* by selective breeding, multiplied and distributed to the beekeepers through the selected bee breeders. The advanced high tech method standardized by the centre has been disseminated to the beginners in beekeeping, beekeepers, bee breeders, women self-help groups and unemployed youth through various field oriented training programmes. The centre is offering beekeepers orientation training to the beginners in beekeeping and refresher training on beekeeping to the stake holders. Earnest efforts are being made to rejuvenated the beekeeping industry through technical guidance to the beekeepers and bee breeders and also by handling classes to the public. It is estimated that there are about 6 lakh bee colonies at present in the State. The State Horticulture Mission- Kerala is implementing various projects under yield enhancement through bee pollination in horticultural crops through Kerala Agricultural University, HortiCorp and Khadi Board. The role of honeybees in pollination to ensure food safety is also conveyed to the public through trainings and various mass media programmes. The advanced technologies developed by the University on bee management imparted to beekeepers helped to enhance the average yield of honey from 2-3 Kg to 20-25 Kg per colony making the industry a profitable one in Kerala. Hence large numbers of new farmers are taking up this industry. The concerted efforts of all those who involved in the industry helped to provide employment potential to the unemployed rural youth and women and thus explored the potential of beekeeping in the State and for the sweet come back.