East Africa Honey Programme BRIEFING
“Traidcraft’s project has injected a major boost into our beekeeping enterprise. The training we have received on beekeeping techniques has helped us improve our bee husbandry. The first apiary was near our house but after training we relocated the apiary to a lower part of our farm. We monitor the apiary regularly and are further building a proper apiary from some of the income we have generated from sale of honey. We have now increased the number of bee hives from 15 to 38.”

Beekeeper, Central Kenya
Introduction to HONEY & BEEKEEPING IN EAST AFRICA

Honey production is a staple activity for thousands of poor households across East Africa. Market demand locally and regionally for honey and associated bee products is strong. However, for many small-scale beekeepers an inefficient value chain and a lack of producer organisation prevents them from making the most of this opportunity. Small-scale beekeepers in the region tend to have traditional knowledge of apiculture but are not aware of modern technological advances. Quality assurance processes are generally weak and beekeepers have limited understanding of market dynamics. There is a lack of locally available appropriate support services that could help beekeepers to address knowledge and skill gaps, both in terms of technical apiculture skills, but also in terms of business skills and market awareness. The lack of organisation amongst small-scale beekeepers means they have limited capacity to address these weaknesses, and the large numbers of unorganised beekeepers limits the engagement of formal private sector players in these chains, leaving beekeepers at risk of unfair business practices by unscrupulous traders.

Men and women play differing roles in honey production, these vary across geographic contexts and according to local socio-cultural norms. Nonetheless, it is generally the case that, as in other value chains, women involved in honey production are disadvantaged by a subordinate position within society and by extensive household and caring responsibilities.

As well as providing small-scale rural producers with an opportunity to increase and diversify incomes, beekeeping brings with it the added opportunity to strengthen environmental stewardship – safeguarding environmental resources and ecosystem services for current and future generations. This can be particularly beneficial in fragile and vulnerable environments, such as forested areas and drought-prone arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL). Beekeeping can play a powerful role in wider programming that encompasses institutional development to help reconcile competing interests and support environmental stewardship.

Traidcraft’s HISTORY IN HONEY

Traidcraft Exchange (TX) is the sister organisation of Traidcraft Plc, one of the UK’s leading Fair Trade companies. Traidcraft Plc was established in 1979. In the 1980s Traidcraft Plc began sourcing honey from Fair Trade producer organisations in developing countries and retailing to consumers in the UK. TX and partners initiated honey programmes in Kenya’s ASAL and with forest beekeepers in Tabora, Tanzania. The first range of Traidcraft honeys were sourced from beekeepers in Tanzania, Zambia and China. As the UK’s Fair Trade market matured in the 1990s, Traidcraft’s honey sourcing extended to India, South Africa, the Philippines, Chile, Bangladesh and Malawi. In the 2000s, beekeeper co-operatives in Guatemala joined the portfolio. During this time, honey also became a key ingredient in composite products such as GeoBar, Traidcraft’s Fairtrade cereal bar range, launched in 1999.

The practical experience within the wider Traidcraft family of working with and developing honey supply chains, as well as the sector’s challenges and opportunities as outlined above, informed Traidcraft Exchange’s decision to put honey and beekeeping at the heart of its East Africa programme in the early 2000s.

The overall aim of the programme is economic empowerment of small-scale beekeepers through strong, sustainable honey value chains that are efficient, effective and equitable. To date the programme has worked directly with over 9,000 beekeepers across Kenya and Tanzania.

The programme has been implemented in partnership with SITE Enterprise Promotion, Faida Mali and Iriani Tea Factory. It has been generously supported by various project grants, including from the EU, DFID, Comic Relief, the Big Lottery Fund and Ringtons Tea Company, as well as numerous trusts, foundations and individuals.

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<td>Traidcraft sources Fair trade honey from Tanzania, as well as from other countries in Africa and Asia.</td>
<td>TX and partners undertake honey value chain analysis in Kenya and Tanzania.</td>
<td>TX and partners initiate honey programme with pastoralists in Kenya’s ASAL and with forest beekeepers in Tabora, Tanzania.</td>
<td>TX and partners pilot diversification via beekeeping with tea growers in central Kenya.</td>
<td>TX initiates the 2nd phase of the programme in Tanzania consolidating work in Tabora and extending to coastal Pwani.</td>
<td>TX and partners expand the beekeeping diversification programme in central Kenya.</td>
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WHERE we’ve worked

**EAST AFRICA**

5400 Beekeepers from pastoralist communities in Baringo, West Pokot, Elgeyo-Marakwet and Laikipia Counties in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL).

Phase two:
- 3136 Beekeepers in Tabora and Pwani regions.

Phase one:
- 233 Tea farmers diversifying to beekeeping in Nyeri County.
- 700 Forest beekeepers in Tabora region.

Programme approach for the economic empowerment of small-scale beekeepers

**PROGRAMME APPROACH**

The overall aim of the Traidcraft Exchange East Africa Honey programme is the economic empowerment of small-scale beekeepers through developing strong, sustainable honey value chains that are efficient, effective and equitable. The programme approach is explained in the following pages and depicted in the diagram below.
It is thanks to BEET project that we are back in business today. Integration of improved beekeeping, leadership, record keeping training was sound enough to revive us.”

Beekeeper, Pwani region, Tanzania.
[BEET was the programme’s 2nd phase in Tanzania.]

Key elements of the Programme Approach

PROMOTING COLLECTIVE WORKING THROUGH INSTITUTION BUILDING

At the centre of Traidcraft Exchange’s honey programme is the promotion of collective working through the formation and strengthening of beekeeper-led institutions. Collective working builds social capital. It enables small-scale beekeepers to access training and support, strengthen their voice, achieve economies of scale, and improve negotiating power. At the village-level it involves the formation of beekeeper groups. These are then federated under associations or co-operatives at the district, county or regional level.

Achievements:
In phase one in Tanzania, 27 beekeeper groups were formed and/or supported in Tabora region.
In phase two, 22 groups were formed in Pwani and an additional 15 new groups in Tabora. 22 groups established in phase one were supported to strengthen as institutions.
At the end of phase two, independent evaluators found that 97% of participating beekeepers reported satisfaction with membership of their groups.
In addition, evaluators found that 20 of the 22 groups in Pwani and 13 of the 15 new groups in Tabora were implementing their own business plans.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT: APICULTURE PRACTICES AND BUILDING BETTER BUSINESSES

Once established into groups, training and mentoring is extended to support the development of professional business-orientated beekeepers. Training and mentoring is focused both on technical skills and knowledge for apiculture – enabling beekeepers to improve the quantity and quality of the honey they produce – and on key business skills such as financial management and market access.

Achievements:
In Tanzania, 805 beekeepers were trained on key apiculture topics in phase one; in phase two, 1311 beekeepers were trained. Topics included: improved bee husbandry, colony management, hive selection, harvesting and processing, and traceability.
At the end of phase two, independent evaluators found 100% of participating beekeepers had adopted at least one improved beekeeping practice, and 86% experienced a 20% or more increase in their honey volumes.
In the programme’s first phase in Kenya’s ASAL, 90% of participating beekeepers doubled their annual honey volumes.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Sustained development of the honey value chain requires investment in key infrastructure. This includes apiaries which become the site of much of the training extended to beekeepers. Training beekeepers at live apiaries ensures the training is practical and hands-on. Key infrastructure also includes honey collection centres: these enable beekeepers to process and bulk honey, and provide a focal point for marketing activities such as meeting potential buyers.

Achievements:
In Tanzania, partnership with local government has enabled the establishment of apiaries. Beekeepers have contributed both in-kind and in-cash to the construction of these. In Kenya (both Central and ASAL regions) over 32 group apiaries have been established.
In addition, honey collection centres have been established in both Kenya and Tanzania. In Tabora region these have been established through partnerships with local government.
In central Kenya, Iriani tea factory has been supported to bulk, process and market honey from local beekeepers.

ENSURING ONGOING PROVISION OF SERVICES & INPUTS

To ensure sustainability the programme has enhanced the availability of high-quality inputs and services in each targeted region. For inputs, this has included working with local carpenters and tradespeople on hive construction and equipment production. At the same time, the programme has worked to develop the technical skills of local resource people who provide ongoing advice and guidance to beekeeper groups on key topics such as hive management, disease prevention, honey quality assurance – as well as on organisational and business development skills.

Achievements:
In phase one in Tanzania, 6 local service local private service providers were trained to support beekeeper groups with business skills and organisational development, 12 were trained to provide support on technical apiculture skills.
In phase two in Tanzania, over 100 local tailors and carpenters were trained to produce beekeeping equipment including protective suits and hives.

I also used to have difficulties in processing honey here in the house, but I received training on honey harvesting and processing. [The trainer] has also been doing follow ups and has shown me a simplified way of processing honey and the quality and quantity of our honey has since improved.”

Beekeeper, Central Kenya
The engagement with BEET has led to transformation of mind-set. I see myself more confident and with ability to achieve my goals. The confidence boost has enabled me to supply the needs of my family even after the death of my lovely husband.”

Beekeeper, Pwani region, Tanzania.

[BEET was the programme’s 2nd phase in Tanzania.]

**Key elements of the Programme Approach cont.**

**STRENGTHENING LINKS TO MARKETS**

The programme has worked to build links between beekeepers and local, national, regional and export markets. In Central Kenya our partner tea factory has provided a market linkage service between beekeepers and large buyers, with existing factory infrastructure used to process, bulk and package honey efficiently. In the ASAL region of Kenya and across the two target regions of Tanzania, the programme has strengthened links with markets via a network of trade facilitators who link beekeepers with potential buyers. Beekeepers have been supported to understand the larger value chain, their place within it, the emerging market trends and the quality requirements of different markets.

**SUPPORTING WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT**

The programme has actively targeted women: encouraging and supporting diversification of incomes through beekeeping. Women have been trained to use equipment that reduces the work burden required for beekeeping and improves safety, including smokers and protective suits. Women’s empowerment has been promoted across the programme: women have been supported to stand for leadership positions on the executive committees of groups and associations/co-ops. In Tanzania the programme has worked with the groups to establish ‘women business forums’ which meet regularly and provide a space in which women entrepreneurs can share experiences, achievements and learning. The programme has worked across diverse geographies and social contexts and as such has had to refine and adapt approaches and expectations as deeper contextual understanding emerges.

**Achievements:**

In phase one in Tanzania, regional market research was conducted on honey demand across East Africa (Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda). Findings were disseminated to beekeeper groups and beekeepers were supported to participate in key international trade exhibitions.

At the end of phase one in Tanzania, independent evaluation found that through collective working, beekeepers were able to establish standard minimum prices for their honey. The minimum price was set at around 25% higher than the previous season’s prevailing price. The majority of beekeepers, though selling individually, were able to demand this price; in some cases higher.

**PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP**

The programme has worked to improve environmental stewardship in each target region. It has raised awareness of the importance of safeguarding natural resources amongst beekeepers and their communities, and has worked to discourage damaging practices such as charcoal burning – a major contributing factor to deforestation in Tanzania particularly. Where appropriate, the programme has worked with local communities to develop processes and institutions that support improved environmental stewardship in vulnerable environments such as with pastoralists in Kenya’s ASAL.

**Achievements:**

In Tanzania over 1500 beekeepers have been trained on environmental stewardship. As a result, beekeepers have adopted practices such as using smokers for harvesting instead of setting forest fires, reduced use of bark for hive construction, providing water ponds for bees near apiaries and establishing tree nurseries.

In Kenya’s ASAL, ‘Natural Resource Management’ (NRM) committees were formed amongst pastoralist communities. NRM committees developed ‘Action Plans’ and collaborated with local government on implementation. The committees work closely with community elders to ensure adherence to environmental codes. These encompass key local issues such as reduced charcoal burning and responsible water-use. Critically, the NRM committees have worked to reduce conflicts related to access to grazing lands and water sources.

After three and a half years, independent evaluation found 90% of participating beekeepers had improved understanding of environmental management practices.

**Economic Empowerment of Small-scale Beekeepers**

As described, the overall aim of the Traidcraft Exchange East Africa Honey programme is economic empowerment of small-scale beekeepers through developing strong, sustainable honey value chains that are efficient, effective and equitable. To date the programme has worked directly with over 9,000 beekeepers across Kenya and Tanzania.

Independent evaluation of phase two in Tanzania found participating beekeepers were benefiting from price increases of 5-28% over 3 years, due partly to improved quality product and improved market access. In addition, over 90% of participating beekeepers increased their incomes from honey by 25% or more; in some cases the magnitude of the income increase was as high as 80%.

In Kenya’s ASAL, participating beekeepers enjoyed increased honey prices of up to 150% (over four years) – in part due to improved bargaining and bulkling at collection points. Independent evaluation found 65% of participating beekeepers had increased their incomes from beekeeping by 70%.

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Bees do not put any pressure on my farm, furthermore these ‘little soldiers’ pay me for my housing them. In July and August this year alone, I have earned Kshs. 44,000.00”

Beekeeper, central Kenya
LEARNING & questions that remain

Institution Building – in for the long haul?
The programme demonstrates that within two years groups can be established and supported to run effectively. However, federated structures (e.g. associations or co-operatives) take a lot longer to institutionalise. This can be challenging within project durations of just 3-4 years. In part this relates to the need for in depth understanding of how to work with entrenched local socio-economic dynamics, and whether, when and how to appropriately but effectively challenge these. In one region of Tanzania the programme witnessed widespread dissatisfaction amongst beekeepers with their current cohort of co-operative leaders. However, when the opportunity to elect a fresh team arose, beekeepers in fact re-elected the same unsatisfactory leadership team. The poor performance of the leadership team then contributed in part to the collapse of the institution.

Realistic expectations and the centrality of trust
Collective working through producer institutions is fundamental to the Traidcraft Exchange approach to empowering small producers. It can be found across our programmes in tea, horticulture, cotton, jute, textiles, small-scale agriculture and more. In the East Africa honey programme however, low-levels of trust between beekeepers has prevented their institutions from undertaking collective marketing. In some contexts, such as central Kenya where demand for honey is very high, this does not appear to have limited beekeeper incomes. However, in Tanzania our understanding is that collective marketing would enable beekeepers to attract bulk buyers and higher prices. It would seem that despite the groups functioning well in other respects, low levels of trust prevent buyers and higher prices. It would seem that despite the groups functioning well in other respects, low levels of trust prevent buyers and higher prices. However, in Tanzania our understanding is that collective marketing would enable beekeepers to attract bulk buyers and higher prices. It would seem that despite the groups functioning well in other respects, low levels of trust prevent buyers and higher prices. It would seem that despite the groups functioning well in other respects, low levels of trust prevent buyers and higher prices. However, in Tanzania our understanding is that collective marketing would enable beekeepers to attract bulk buyers and higher prices. It would seem that despite the groups functioning well in other respects, low levels of trust prevent buyers and higher prices. Despite this, in Tanzania our understanding is that collective marketing would enable beekeepers to attract bulk buyers and higher prices.

Hive type
Are some hive types superior to others? Undertaking this programme review has highlighted widely used, but culturally loaded and sometimes unhelpful, terminology associated with hive types. There is a school of thought that contrasts so-called ‘modern’ hives (top-bar or frame hives) with so-called ‘traditional’ hives (fixed comb – basket, bark or log hives). Putting aside of the culturally loaded and normative vocabulary for now, the school of thought asserts the superiority of ‘modern’ hives based upon the suggestion of improved honey yields. Traidcraft Exchange’s experience is that hive type should not be considered in isolation: appropriateness depends on the wider ecosystem of services and support available locally to beekeepers. Beekeepers need to be trained on new hive types by practitioners who are themselves highly experienced in these types. Local service providers need to be available who can construct and help maintain the specific types promoted. Collectively these factors are more critical to hive productivity than hive type per se.
In addition, the assertion of improved yields from the so-called modern hives is challenged by several key contemporary practitioners who assert that when extending the unit of measure from single hives to ‘hive systems’ (within specified geographies) and when looking more closely at productivity over a longer period of time, so-called ‘traditional’ hives are just as productive and sometimes more productive than their ‘modern’ users. Whilst Traidcraft Exchange’s programme monitoring data has not been set-up specifically to shed light on this debate, a related consideration, is hive occupancy rate, a key monitoring indicator of the programme. An unoccupied hive represents unutilised capital, and the ‘cost’ of this to the beekeeper is of course greater when the initial investment is higher, as it is with the so-called ‘modern’ hives. Therefore, depending on the anticipated occupancy rate, and the economic situation of the participating beekeepers (i.e. how much available capital they have), there can be a strong argument for promoting the so-called ‘traditional’ hives.

Further income generation opportunities
It has been reported that higher-value bee products such as wax, pollen and venom offer greater income-earning opportunities than honey. Whilst this may be the case, the experience of the programme is that beekeepers need to first establish their capacity to consistently produce high quality honey before diversifying into these higher value additional products. The exacting quality standards for such products represent a barrier to entry for small-scale and/or less experienced beekeepers. However, they represent an opportunity for investigation in future phases of the programme as beekeepers professionalise.

Climate change
Whilst the programme has engaged with environmental stewardship and sought to safeguard local natural resources which provide essential forage for bees, this component has not always been sufficient to mitigate the impacts of droughts or erratic weather due to climate change. During the programme, droughts have been experienced in targeted regions of both Kenya and Tanzania, profoundly reducing honey production. As the effects of climate change become more pronounced this is an area in which the programme will need to engage more extensively.

Pollination services
Some beekeepers participating in the programme in Central Kenya who keep hives on or near their smallholdings, have provided anecdotal reports of increased crop yields since taking-up beekeeping. This seems consistent with literature on pollination services provided by honeybees in agricultural lands. This potential unintended positive impact has not been systematically explored by the programme, but it is likely to be integrated into the next phase as the programme through a focus on ‘biodiversity value chains’.

Gender and diversity of context
The programme engaged with women’s empowerment through beekeeping in a diversity of geographic and social contexts. Understanding how the specific contexts support or impede women’s empowerment was crucial to making progress in this area. In Tabora in inland Tanzania for example, beekeeping is mainly practised in forest reserves. These areas provide the most abundant forage for...
Diversification as a point of leverage

In Central Kenya, Traidcraft Exchange’s programme with small producers has focused primarily on tea. Whilst smallholder tea growers in the region benefit from some security of market via the highly regulated sector, they report limited capacity to influence their terms of trade. They are the shareholders. Income diversification via beekeeping offers the potential to contribute to small producers gaining greater power to leverage change in the tea supply chain by reducing their dependency. More detail can be found in our tea briefing.

Access to finance

Access to working capital is critical for beekeepers. Especially for forest beekeepers, funds are required for permits, transport, wages for casual labour, and more. For many of the poorest beekeepers, their ability to harvest their honey depends on access to working capital. Any initiative that seeks to empower beekeepers has to consider access to working capital. It separates subsistence beekeepers from commercial beekeepers.

Where appropriate, the Traidcraft Exchange programme has sought to link beekeepers with formal financial services and/or support beekeepers with savings and loans schemes. However, there is more to be done in this regard and the next phase of the programme will more wholeheartedly seek to address this as part of its engagement with the wider enabling environment for honey producers in East Africa.

Further Afield: Traidcraft & honey in Latin America

As described above, Traidcraft Exchange has also collaborated with its sister business Traidcraft Plc to develop honey supply chains outside East Africa. These experiences have provided Traidcraft Exchange with practical experience in export market dynamics, as well as a deeper understanding of the support needs of producer institutions. Two examples from Latin America are summarised briefly here. They further illuminate our focus on developing collective working through institution building, skill and infrastructure development, as well as strengthening links with export markets.

Since 1991, Traidcraft has worked with around 300 beekeepers in Chile. The majority are from the marginalised Mapuche indigenous community. In 1997 the beekeepers formally established the ‘Apicoop’ cooperative. In 2007 Traidcraft began working with the CIPAC cooperative in Guatemala. Traidcraft has worked with 120 beekeeper members, the majority are from an indigenous Mayan community. Traidcraft has worked with CIPAC’s beekeepers to improve apiculture skills – increasing yields, improving quality, preventing bee illnesses and strengthening safety practices. Traidcraft has also supported the cooperative to upgrade its processing facilities and to better understand export market requirements. Over a period of ten years from 2007, honey volumes have doubled from 50-60 metric tonnes per year, to 110-120 metric tonnes.
This ‘programme briefing’ documents the approach, achievements and learning of the Traidcraft Exchange Honey programme in East Africa. It draws upon research undertaken by Lotte Knigge: we extend our thanks to Lotte for her hard-work and support. We hope the briefing will catalyse discussion and debate with other like-minded organisations and individuals committed to ensuring the inclusive and sustainable development of the sector.

The Traidcraft Exchange Honey programme has been implemented in partnership with Faida Mali, SITE Enterprise Promotion, and Iriani Tea Factory. We thank them for their ongoing hard-work and commitment. The programme has been generously supported by project grants from the European Union, the Department for International Development, Big Lottery Fund, Comic Relief and Ringtons tea company, as well as numerous trusts, foundations and individuals. We would like to thank them all for making this work possible.

Beekeeper Saidi Kisoma Bora, Tanzania. Credit: TX/Kate Holt

Front cover photo: Beekeeper Hadija Rajabo Kitango, Tanzania. Credit: TX/Kate Holt

Please get in touch to continue the conversation.
www.traidcraftexchange.org.uk
progammes@traidcraft.org
@TraidcraftDepth
in: www.linkedin.com/company/traidcraft-exchange