

# RWANDA ANIMAL RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY TAKES THE LEAD IN MODERNISING BEEKEEPING IN RWANDA

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**Country: Rwanda**

**Sector: Agriculture (non timber forest products)**

*"Rwanda honey, if well produced would compete on the international market because it is an organic product. Strategies are in place to organise the sector, a move that will help make the change from traditional to modern production techniques of honey. Through a more organised structure, we intend to shift to modern beekeeping"* by Dr Rutagwenda, Director General of RARDA in New times 09/06/09

## CHALLENGE

Beekeeping in Rwanda has been practised through successive generations handed over from father to son; the women involvement into the sector is very recent in conjunction of the gender integration in Rwanda. The activity has always been of traditional, non commercial nature and mostly practiced by men. Honey was used for direct consumption, medicine or for brewing traditional liquor.

Many development organizations have been involved in supporting beekeeping activities but in spite of these attempts, the sector remained underdeveloped. This was due to several reasons; one of them being the unsustainable project oriented approaches used whereby insufficient focus was put on the sector as a whole leaving many opportunities unexploited and limiting impact. Furthermore the interventions lacked coordination and transparency. There were no statistics available and sector policies were non-existent.

## CLIENTS

In 2005 the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock established the Rwanda Animal Resources Development Authority (RARDA) to coordinate the livestock sector including the beekeeping subsector. In 2007 with the facilitation of SNV, a National Beekeeping Strategic Plan (NBSP) 2007-2011, was developed by an advisory team of different organizations and validated by the stakeholders in the sector. RARDA was mandated to implement this plan within the coming five years. Capacity development services and improved coordination of actors were identified as major focus points for this implementation.

In 2008 RARDA started to implement NBSP through a joint operational plan regrouping multiple stakeholders in the sector. Cooperatives were set up in different zones and supported by SNV and the local capacity builders working under its supervision. These activities aimed at improving interactions and linkages between the actors in the value chain, increasing honey production through better organized cooperatives.

## METHOD / SNV INTERVENTION

Based on a context analysis carried out in 2005, SNV decided to get into the beekeeping sector as it showed a good potential within the pro-poor impact perspective in generating income for rural poor by promoting gender equity and environmental sustainability, hence convergent with SNV vision and mission. Furthermore the choice for this sector was motivated by the objectives set under national development policies, particularly through the Vision 2020, the Strategic framework for poverty alleviation (EDPRS) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The national government of Rwanda has been getting more and more involved in the beekeeping sector through RARDA. However, the institution was still young and still had limited financial and human resources. SNV Rwanda therefore saw it opportune to support RARDA in the implementation of the NBSP by providing capacity development services and entered into a formal working relationship with RARDA in 2007.



*FLTR: Mr. Pipien Hakizaber (former DG CAPMER), Dr. Theogene RUTAGWENDA (DG RARDA), Mr. Anastase MUREKEZI (Minister of Agriculture) and Emmanuel RUZIBIZA (SNV Portfolio Coordinator) during the opening ceremony of the national beekeeping*

The context analysis study conducted in 2005 helped convince the decision makers on ministerial level to see the potential of the sector and identified the intervention axes in further developing the sector with RARDA.

RARDA and SNV started their collaboration with assessing the capacity needs of the sector through joint field visits to beekeeping farmers, beekeepers associations, emerging cooperatives, primary processing units and local governments within the strategic beekeeping zones in the country. The data collected served as basis for the five-year National Beekeeping Strategy Plan (NBSP) 2007-2011 endorsed by the cabinet in 2007. An enormous achievement knowing that in 2006 beekeeping was barely on the political agenda. In the development of the NBSP SNV played an important role facilitating and coaching the RARDA beekeeping desk office staff and other key players active in the sector.

With regard to the implementation of the beekeeping strategy SNV has been involved in the development of annual joint action plans for the years 2008 and 2009 bringing together actors operating in different levels within the sector (e.g. state institutions, international NGOs, financial institutions etc.) showing an increased interest the sector.

Cooperatives have at the same time been supported by SNV and two local capacity builders (ARDI and ADEPE) under SNV supervision in elaborating business plans and in becoming more market oriented, focusing on quality and improved production and integrating governance principles.

In general, SNV has invested 452 PPDs equivalent of 17,490 Euros related to the the capacity building of RARDA since 2006.



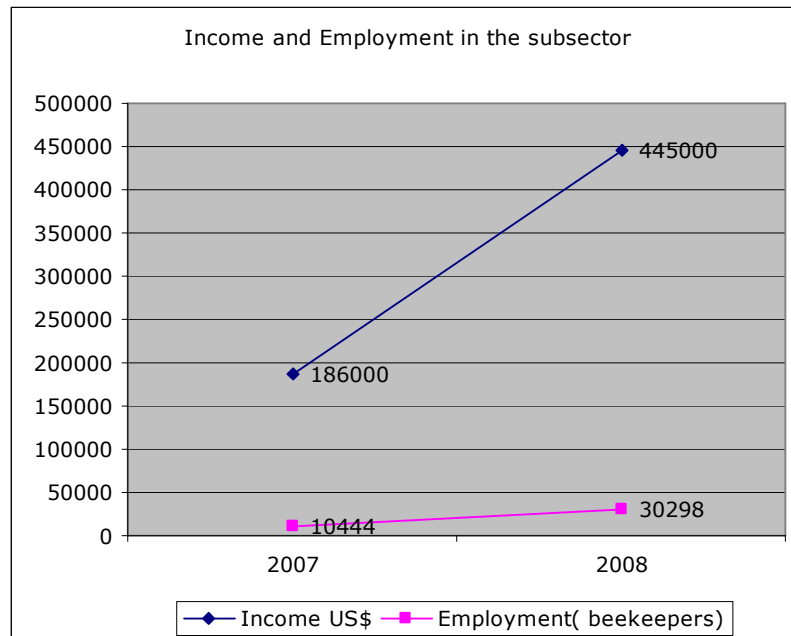
*Mrs Monique NYIRASHURI from KOPAKI Cooperative exhibiting her products during Apiexpo in Kampala, October 2008*

## OUTCOME

With SNV support, RARDA started progressively taking the lead and now owns the process of the economic development of the beekeeping subsector. For the first time, it has recruited a beekeeping desk officer at national level and technical extensions officers at sector level. Currently, RARDA is leading the elaboration of the national beekeeping policy including the beekeeping law which is to be finalised and enacted before the end 2009.

By organising different multi-stakeholder events RARDA has succeeded in improving linkages between the value chain actors increasing competition. Key institutions such as Rwanda Bureau of Standards (RBS) for supporting the chain actors in honey quality improvement; the Rwanda Environment body (REMA); the Tourism and Conservation body (RBD/TC) as well as the Rwanda Cooperative Agency (RCA) have all integrated the beekeeping activities in their respective plans to further contribute to modernising the beekeeping sector from a business perspective. RARDA has also been able to mobilise research institutes such as

High Institute of Agriculture and Livestock (ISAE), and Institute of Scientific and Technology Research (IRST) to work on amongst other on bee epidemics and friendly bee trees. More and more RARDA is growing to be a respected player in the sector able to promote and convince others of investing in it. On international level, even though still limited in quantity RARDA has started marketing honey for the Middle East, Europe as well as the US. This has become possible because of quality improvement, increased honey production and participation to international trade fairs.



Source: SNV Rwanda, Annual report 2008

On production level beekeepers have better access to inputs and services through cooperatives proven by the sharp increase in production that can be observed. Production has increased from 102 T in 2007 to 159 T in 2008<sup>1</sup>; an increase of 45%. Access is still further improved by the infrastructures that RARDA is currently putting in place such as honey collection centres including its primary equipments for cooperatives. Special attention is given to governance principles (gender, environment and social inclusion), which has led to a more active participation of youth and women in the sector. The number of female beekeeper increased from 2799 in 2007 to 7233 in 2008 for the youth this has increased from 4020 in 2007 to 4730 in 2008<sup>2</sup>.

#### Critical success factors

There is political support for the beekeeping sector in Rwanda. In 2007, the government has acknowledged the potential of beekeeping and has made funds available for the sector for the first time. Towards ensuring results within the joint strategy, the national programme framework projected a required total of Frw 2,214 million (US\$4 million) for 5 years and through cabinet approval in 2007, Frw156 million (US\$ 0,24 million) was allocated for the year 2008 as direct budget support to Rwanda Animal Resource development Authority. There is also an active participation of local governments (Districts) in the implementation of NBSP 2007-2012 including support for the set up and registration of cooperatives, for beekeeping platforms at district level and for promoting women and youth in the sector. The opportunities given by national and regional trade fairs contribute to increased inter-regional trade awareness and knowledge dissemination. The key stakeholders remain fully committed and participate to the implementation of

<sup>1</sup> SNV Baseline survey 2007 and 2008; data not available for 2005 and 2006

<sup>2</sup> SNV Rwanda Annual report 2008

## LESSONS LEARNED

the national beekeeping strategy and executed their mandates in the Joint Operational Plan.

SNV observes that on producer level the beekeepers are becoming more and more business oriented and the beekeeping sector is progressively shifting from the subsistence to a more business oriented perspective contributing to increased revenues. Focus has changed from increasing the number of hives to increasing production per hive a clear indication of the professionalization of the beekeepers.

The climatic conditions remain of course very favourable for the production of honey and bee products as well as for the survival of bee colonies.

The multi stakeholder platforms have created an opening for dialogue, planning, networking, knowledge brokering and advocacy. The results from these platforms show their effectiveness in contributing to economic development and a very good investment for delivering SNV services and products!

Continuous attention should be given to governance for empowerment principles: not only should they be integrated at client contracting level and during dialogue within platforms but they should also be closely monitored.

Trade fairs and expos have proven to be important avenues for knowledge development enhancing market linkages and networks. Exhibitors get the opportunity to network with input suppliers from the country and from the region.

### **Main Challenges**

Even though much progress has been made, the sector still faces many challenges, mostly related to limited human and financial resources on both government and private sector level. At the moment there is no functioning market information system. Next to that, there is a lack of tangible statistics and information affecting the credibility of monitoring system to measure progress of the sector. Also quality certification still remains a challenge as also the high prices of honey.

The subsector is still suffering from some stakeholders who are supporting chain operators with grants provision instead of stimulating them to have access to investment capital through financial services linkages, resulting in a negative impact on the quality of product.

### **Conclusion**

Since 2005, when the beekeeping sector was almost non-existent, until now impressive improvements have been made especially in terms business orientation of honey production and quality and marketing possibilities for the sector. Business oriented cooperatives are emerging as real enterprises. And in all this RARDA has proven itself an adequate player and a growing leader for the sector development. SNV played and continues to play a key role in supporting this client through capacity development services provision, knowledge development and brokering.

The beekeeping subsector is now a very promising niche of entrepreneurship in Rwanda and even has shown its potential for the export market. Many challenges still remain but also many opportunities have not yet been explored; think of the diversification of bee products for the market, improved packaging materials, product certification, etc. The first step however is to focus on increase the production and quality of the products thereby building organizational capacities at all level of the chain and further improving the coordination of all efforts made by supporting organizations.