“It has been recognized that honey is a potential commodity which could generate foreign currency as much as coffee. Besides, it is one of income generating means for Ethiopian farmers.”
Allafrica.com, 2017
BEEKEEPING IN ETHIOPIA: A BRIEF HISTORY

Beekeeping has been practiced in Ethiopia for over 5,000 years, with evidence dating its presence in Ethiopia as far back as 3,500 to 3,000 BC. Folklore rumors that the Queen of Sheba brought honey back to the country after her famous visit with King Solomon in Jerusalem, a visit that is of significant historic importance in Ethiopia’s national mythology. Other Ethiopian rulers are also famously linked to beekeeping, including the great King Lalibela from the 13th century, whose monolithic rock-hewn churches remain one of the country’s most important spiritual destinations and popular tourist attractions. According to legend, the king was named “Lalibela” – or “recognized as a ruler by the bees” in the language of the time – by his mother when she saw a swarm of bees surround him as a newborn. The town of Lalibela is still known for the sweet taste of its honey.
As far back as the third century AD, when the Aksumite King Ezana made it famous, honey has been used by Ethiopia’s nobility and social elite in the preparation of a traditional honey mead and the production of candles for high profile events and religious ceremonies. These remain the two most common domestic outputs from Ethiopian beekeeping. Today, more than 80% of domestic honey consumption goes into making the local honey mead, called tej, the “national drink” of Ethiopia. Local tej makers often use the beeswax byproduct of their brewing to
make the traditional candles, called twaf, used in religious ceremonies of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

In addition to its uses as a sweetener, honey itself is still commonly used, together with garlic, as a traditional remedy for the common cold.

Traditional beekeeping is practiced in nearly all regions of Ethiopia, by more than one million smallholder farmers. Though backyard beekeeping is practiced in the majority of the country, forest beekeeping is common in the rainforest-covered hills of the south and south west regions.

BEESWAX is useful primarily for honey comb, cosmetic industries, candle making, ointment and cream, varnishes and polishes, creating special forms and surfaces for artistic sculptures.

Other beekeeping products such as pollen, royal jelly, bee venom, propolis are used in the cosmetics, pharmaceutical and food industry.
Honey
an organic natural sugar
used as a substitute for sugar in many food and drinks

contains
fructose
glucose
carbohydrates
vitamins
minerals

has
anti-bacterial
anti-fungal
antioxidants
properties

a great source of
energy

indefinite
shelf life
if stored correctly

easily adapts to
cooking process

used in the
cosmetics industry for
skin care
and
hair products.
HONEY AND BEESWAX PRODUCTION AND EXPORT

Ethiopia’s diverse climatic conditions and floral resources allow the country to sustain between seven and 10 million honey bee colonies, the highest honey bee colony density in Africa and the third highest in the world. Ethiopia is the leading producer of honey and wax in Africa, with figures from 2015 indicating 45,000 metric tons of honey and 5,000 metric tons of wax were produced. On a global scale, Ethiopia is the third largest producer of beeswax and the tenth largest honey producer, though estimates suggest that the country could be producing 100% more honey and beeswax per annum with the right investments in commercialization.
Types of Honey

Traditional small-scale beekeeping still accounts for more than 90% of the current production of honey and almost all of the beeswax. Adoption of modern hives, which produce three times more than the traditional hives, is nascent but growing across the country.

Currently, only 2-3% of Ethiopia’s honey and 10% of its beeswax make their way to international markets. Both the export and domestic markets for these products are untapped and show remarkable potential.
Why Ethiopian honey and beeswax?

Potential to tap into organic honey and beeswax markets

Ethiopian honey is produced organically. It has been listed by the European Commission as one of the few countries from which it is permitted to export organic honey and beeswax, creating a largely untapped opportunity for companies exporting honey from Ethiopia.

Availability of unique specialty honeys

significant potential to produce mono-floral specialty honey such as coffee honey, acacia honey, cactus fruit honey, and eucalyptus honey

Supports Ethiopia’s female farmers

who make up 70% of producers

Supports Environmental Conservation

Ethiopia promotes beekeeping in forests and protected areas to promote global plant diversity and environmental health. Beekeeping has no negative impact on the environment and is highly suited to the environment.
Want to know more?
Contact us

Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency
  t: (+251) 115 570 678/79
  e: info@ata.gov.et
  www.ata.gov.et

Ministry of Trade
Haimanot Tibebu Kassaye/Mrs/
Director, Export Research & Promotion Directorate
  t: +251-115155742  m: +251-911666575
  e: haimanotti@gmail.com

Ethiopian Apiculture Board
Mr. Negash Bekena
  t: (+251) 911879963
  e: ethioapic2012@gmail.com

Ethiopian Honey and Beeswax Producers and Exporters Association
Mr. Eliyas Zewdie
  t: (+251) 911 606492
  e: Eliaszewdie1@gmail.com

Ethiopian Beekeepers Association
Mr. Gemechis Legesse
  t: (+251) 0911444668
  gemly93@yahoo.com