Enhancing commercialisation of Non-Wood Forest Products: A case of bee honey in Kalinzu Central Forest Reserve

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Introduction: Kalinzu CFR is renowned for its potential to provide Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFPs). Collaborative forest management is practised in this CFR, and participating groups have selected apiculture along with tree planting as the enterprises to be practiced in the production zone of the forest. Beekeeping provides enormous potential for integrating forest dependent people into forest conservation interventions. It is a low investment enterprise that can be developed alongside the core principles of environmental management and forest conservation This study assessed the existing honey value chain in Kalinzu to identify key areas for strategic intervention.

Materials and Methods: A value chain approach was used to analyse the honey value chain and market potential in Kalinzu and adjacent areas. Apiculture hotspots in areas adjacent to Kalinzu CFR were purposively selected. Using snowball sampling, 49 bee-keeping households were selected for in-depth interviews. Key Informant Interviews, Focus group discussions and Market surveys were also conducted.

Results and discussions: The main actors in the value chain were: bee keepers, middlemen, processors, consumers, local beer brewers and traditional herbalists (Fig. 1). Most of the honey buyers came from villages and adjacent trading centres. As a result, and due to lack of value addition, the average farm-gate price (UGX 6000 per kg) was substantially lower than the average market price (UGX 13,000 per kg). Elite middlemen and some established buyers such as Bushenyi Bee honey connoisseur seem to benefit more by buying from farmers at very low prices and adding value through packaging. The majority of sampled bee farmers (87.5%) were members of small groups and/or associations. The scale of production per household was generally low averaging thirteen bee hives among the sampled households. As a result, the honey produced was still low to enable groups to enjoy economies of scale. Despite the fact that 46.9% of the respondents had spent over 10 years in apiculture, a reasonable number (49%) had never received any formal training. Thus, bee keepers still relied on rudimentary technologies of production such as use of traditional beehives.

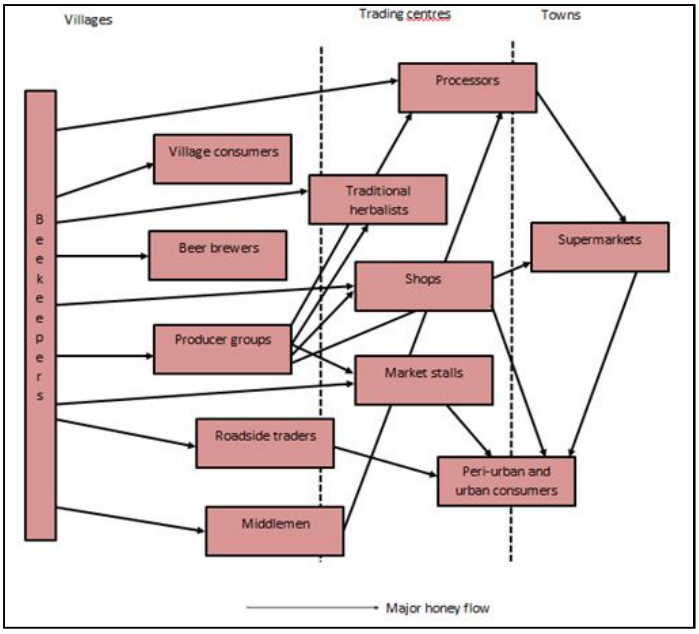

Fig.1: An illustration of the honey value chain in Kalinzu



Fig. 2: A typical apiary in the study area

A cost-benefit analysis for the different beehive technologies showed that langthroth hives provided better profits followed by KTB and traditional hives (Table 1). The main challenges faced in the honey business in order of importance were: pests and diseases, lack of modern equipment, lack of better markets, lack of technical knowledge, and absconding of bees

Table 1: Projected profits for 3 beehive types after five years

Type of beehive	Costs (UGX)	Gross profit (UGX)	Net Profit (UGX)
Traditional	460,000	4,800,000	4,340,000
KTB	1,060,000	9,600,000	8,540,000
Langstroth	6,860,000	19,200,000	12,340,000

Conclusion and recommendation: Apiculture has the potential to significantly contribute to improved livelihoods of communities adjacent to Kalinzu CFR. There is however a need for bee-farmer capacity building to enable them participate in the entire value chain, from production, processing, packaging to marketing of honey.

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