

## FOREWORD

The role of bees in sustaining forests and forest dependent livelihoods remains poorly known and appreciated. Bees are a fantastic world resource: they are essential for sustaining our environment because they pollinate flowering plants. Bees sustain our agriculture by pollinating crops and thereby increasing yields of seeds and fruits.

The product that most people first associate with bees is honey, although beekeeping generates much more than just honey: the maintenance of biodiversity and pollination of crops are perhaps the most valuable services provided by bees. Honey is just one of several different products that can be harvested: others are beeswax, pollen and propolis, royal jelly and venom, and the use of bees in apitherapy, which is medicine using bee products.

Bees and beekeeping contribute to peoples' livelihoods in almost every country on earth. Honey and the other products obtained from bees have long been known by every society. The diversity in bee species, their uses and in beekeeping practices varies greatly between regions. In many parts of the world, significant volumes of honey are today still obtained by plundering wild colonies of bees, while elsewhere beekeeping is practised by highly skilled people. Honey hunting of wild bee colonies still remains an important part of the livelihoods of forest dependent peoples in many developing countries.

Today, apiculture plays a valuable part in rural livelihoods worldwide, and this book aims to provide an insight into the many ways in which bees and beekeeping contribute to these livelihoods, and how to strengthen this contribution. While the rationale for the sustainable use of tree resources is widely appreciated, by contrast the sustainable use of bee resources is poorly promoted and appreciated. Rural people in every developing country are keeping bees or harvesting from them in one way or another. This book aims to help ensure that these people gain the most from these activities.

FAO wishes to thank Dr Nicola Bradbear, the author of this work, and is pleased to publish and disseminate this technical document to promote more sustainable beekeeping practices which will better sustain forest dependent livelihoods in the developing world. I hope that this publication will also contribute to many more small-scale efforts to encourage beekeeping interventions throughout the world, helping people to strengthen livelihoods and ensuring maintenance of forest habitats and biodiversity.

  
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