

The Socio-economics, Culture and Ecology of Bee-keeping Among the Akamba Community of Southern Kenya

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KEYWORDS Bee-keeping. Akamba Community. Indigenous Knowledge. Bio-diversity. Semi-arid Kenya

ABSTRACT This study, carried out among the Akamba community inhabiting semi-arid country in southern Kenya, investigated the factors affecting honey production. It was found that the size of landholdings explains upto twenty percent of the variation in the distribution of beehives among bee-keepers. In addition, land use shift from livestock rearing under bush-land to cultivation has negatively impacted honey production through indiscriminate cutting of trees, which has led to the destruction of honey plants. In the recent past, bee-keeping and honey production have been on the decline because of the advent of horticultural and dryland farming, increased use of pesticides, deforestation, and degradation of the environment. Farming activities, increased construction of houses due to rising population charcoal burning, and fencing have, in sum, reduced the proportion of nectar-producing plant species. Although the local people have a lot of traditional knowledge in bee-keeping, this has not been translated into increased production, commensurate with rising demand for honey. Among the above-mentioned factors, the reasons for this have been lack of incentives and extension services. This study recommends renewed efforts, therefore, by government and other development agents to undertake research and development activities geared towards boosting the number of apiaries, processing, and marketing to ensure sustainable honey production.