ZOOM IN ON MOZAMBIQUE

Mozambique is in south-east Africa bordered on its East Coast by the Indian Ocean. It has a warm, tropical climate with temperatures of 15°C during the dry winter months (April-September) and 30°C during the summer rainy season. About 60% of the country is natural forest providing an ideal environment for organic honey production.

Population
Twenty-five million. Following more than four centuries Portuguese colonial rule, Mozambique suffered civil war until 1992.

Size: 801,590 km²

Agriculture
Arable land accounts for 45% of the country and agriculture is the backbone of the economy, with subsistence farming contributing 80% of total agriculture production. Key cash crops are cotton, sugar and tobacco in addition to beans, cassava, maize and rice.

Beekeeping
The honey bee Apis mellifera scutellata is indigenous and Mozambique has a long history of beekeeping. Central and southern parts offer the most potential for honey and beeswax production with vegetation capable of supporting large populations of honey bees. Extensive beekeeping using hives made from the bark of local trees is widespread. These time-honoured methods are practised in rural communities where the sale of honey is an important source of cash income. Annual sales of honey per beekeeper range from 53 kg in Gondola, 411 kg in Sussundenga to 500 kg in Maputo. Honey harvest in most regions takes place twice a year. Honey cropping commonly takes place at night when the bees are less defensive.

Honey production
Mozambique has favourable conditions for organic honey production and a good history of beekeeping, yet various factors, including lack of investment, producer training, credit and market access have hindered the growth and productivity of the sector. Furthermore illegal logging, wildfires, shifting cultivation and various climatic issues such as drought and flooding, are constantly challenging production. Should these constraints be addressed it is believed that dominant honey producing regions have the capacity to easily double their current production rates. Recently assistance is emerging for producers, and the honey sector shows much promise.

Trade
Honey is used as food, medicine and for alcoholic drinks. There is no well-developed market for beeswax. Although some regional co-operatives exist, production and trade remain individual, with many beekeepers selling their honey by the roadside. Honey is produced in natural environments, free from contaminants and has excellent flavour. Unfortunately honey which is packed and sold as table honey must compete with imported honey which tends to be marketed with higher quality packaging and labelling. This is a key area for development of the Mozambique market. Official export of honey from the country is largely non-existent, however there is confidence that Mozambique’s honey could compete in the high-end, organic market. Mozambique does not have a Residue Monitoring Plan recognised by the EU and therefore cannot export to the EU.

Associations
One obstacle to honey trade has been the lack of organisation among producers, with only some regional co-operatives in existence and isolated efforts by different NGOs and private enterprises to offer training to beekeepers. Bees for Development’s long term correspondent, Tecla David of Casa do Mel, buys honey from the Chiziriza Association in Manica Province and works to help them produce more honey and to sell it in bulk. The Mozambique Honey Company MHC was established in 2010, 45% owned by its 5,000 small-scale producers, and aiming to improve the sustainability and profitability of production as well as providing much needed access to markets. The strategy of the company is to focus on harvesting organic honey for both the high-end domestic and international export markets.

With this new momentum, the Mozambique Government is beginning to take greater interest in the sector. The Dutch organisation SNV is working with small-scale producers, processors and local government to develop a National Honey Council to provide an arena for joint action and policy dialogue.

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