SA Bee Industry: Overview & Needs

Mike Allsopp
ARC-PPRI, Stellenbosch
Bees & Pollination in South Africa – Future Prospects

Mike Allsopp
ARC-PPRI, Stellenbosch
SA Bee Industry: Overview & Needs

Mike Allsopp
ARC-PPRI, Stellenbosch
Overview

• How?
• How to assess the vitality of the beekeeping industry in South Africa?
• How is RSA is doing with regards to these global & local beekeeping issues?
• Data, censuses, records? Very little available.
• Personal approach – personal opinion of the aspects that I consider important in the vitality of the SA Bee Industry.
• Report Card approach – A, B, C or F.
• And then a personal opinion on the most pressing Needs of the SA Bee Industry.
Industry Profile / Information

- Really very poor
- Don’t know how many beekeepers, how many colonies, how much honey produced, how many colonies used in pollination, . . .
- Industry still mired in secrets & suspicion
- Needs to change if the industry is to advance
- F

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Beekeepers</th>
<th>Hives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WC</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>47,839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>4,807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KZN</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8,396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FS</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>2,830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3,317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NW</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1,207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limp</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>2,529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>1,119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>7,857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,246</strong></td>
<td><strong>79,901</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Industry Co-operation & Representation

- Terrible
- Many areas without beekeeper groups
- Constant bickering & disunity, for the past twenty five years – despite the Herculean efforts of many people
- Can a organization with 60-80 members be representative of beekeepers in RSA?
- Needs to be fixed.
- F
Beekeeper Standards

- From excellent to appalling
- Need to have required standards & Code of Conduct
- Need pollination standards & audits
- Need inspections and compliance
- Product quality generally good but occasional problems
- C
Honey Production

• No-one knows how much.
• 1000 to 1500 tons per annum with around 3000 tons being imported.
• Zero imports only 25 years ago.
• Many reasons for the decrease - changes in forestry, gum removals, gum pests, other changes in forage availability, theft and vandalism
• Some very serious research is needed to identify unique & marketable SA honeys
• C
Pollination Services

• Mostly excellent, some terrible
• Need farm audits to ensure quality and standards
• Pollination prices are poor - < 50% of international levels
• Vast amount of research is needed to determine best pollination practices for most of the target crops
• B
Product Development & Marketing

- Mostly very good when it comes to value-added products (creams, tinctures, etc)
- Lots of work still needed in promoting local honey varieties
- Honey prices much too low and set by price of imported honey
- Failure to differentiate for the consumer the difference between imported and local honey
- B
Pest & Disease Management

• Very little, and highly variable
• Do not know what the situation is with AFB, and essentially hoping the problem will just go away by itself
• After 25 years still have nothing for the Capensis Problem.
• Know almost nothing about pest & diseases in RSA – nosema, viruses, pirates.
• Default position is requiring the bees to deal with the problem
• C
Stock Improvement

• Not happen much in RSA
• Difficult with Capensis Problem, and theft issues, and migratory nature of our bees
• But do need to be more active in stock improvement
• C
Enhancing Bee Forage

- Major threat in RSA.
- Lots of progress in creating awareness, building partnerships, collecting data – but no progress in getting trees in the ground
- Needs high level advocacy
- Possibly need to re-visit the gum issue?
- C
Grower Involvement

- Mostly limited but improving
- Much greater awareness of the importance of bees in seed industry, sub-tropical, berries
- Still work that needs to be done in canola, citrus, litchis
- Growers need to champion bee issues at national level
- Need growers to enforce audits to improve beekeeping standards & hence pollination standards
- C
Government Involvement

- Limited (no?) disease management
- No enforcement
- Border control (?)
- Product quality (pesticides, adulteration)
- Limited research support
- F
Transformation

- Thousands of beekeepers trained but no real transformation of the industry
- Often box-ticking and/or money-making exercises
- Struggling to bridge the gap from hobbyist to professional beekeeper
- No auditing or assessment of development programmes
- Too many beekeepers for our forage capacity; detrimental to the industry
- C
Pesticides & Stewardship

- Regulations around pesticides could be substantially improved, particularly with respect to enforcement
- Interface with the Crop Protection industry is good
- As yet no development of bee-friendly stewardship
- C
Theft & Vandalism

- No progress on this issue for decades
- Significant driver in making beekeeping in RSA non-sustainable
- Almost a lost cause for the industry?
- F
Apex Bee Management Body

• Urgent need to have some Apex group (=Apicultural Advisory Committee) to advice on beekeeping and honey bee related matters
• With all stakeholders active
• And reaching into the top reaches of government
• First steps taken to achieve this . . . (?)
Basic Knowledge

- Severely lacking in RSA
- Nectar sources, pollen sources
- Bee migrations
- Bee Pirates, viruses, bee races
- Pollination requirements
- C

Honeybee Pasture
Returning nature to its abundant state by planting nectar trees.
Research Activities

- Limited capacity
- Poor co-operation and unhealthy co-operation
- Needs industry funding with government support (RIDC type)
- C
Overview

- SA Bee Industry in a pretty dire situation
- Limited honey production capacity, very expensive production, poor prices for honey, poor payment for pollination
- Limited support, influence, funding
- Fragmented & divided industry
Overview

- Largely healthy, massively resilient bee population
- Rapidly increasing demand for bees for crop pollination
- Demand that will continue to grow
- Market forces WILL result in a more efficient, stable, profitable bee industry
- How long will it take? …..
Needs

- A sensible discussion on the need for a honey import tariff; to protect pollination services in a honey-poor country; not dissimilar to the chicken & AGOA situation.

- A Beekeeping Organization representing majority of beekeepers in RSA; should represent ONLY beekeepers and not importers or growers or other stakeholders.

- Establishment of an Apex Body to manage bee-related issues; to accommodate all other interest groups.
Needs

- National government to take responsibility for bee disease management in RSA, including the establishment of inspection services, and active enforcement.

- An audited & rational beekeeping development programme to successfully transform beekeeping in RSA

- A funding programme for industry needs along the lines of RIDC; a proportion of development programme funding for industry research
Needs

• A pollination support programme in RSA that sees trees in the ground

• Grower bodies enforcing beekeeper standards

• A retailer group adopting Bee-Friendly as a marketing ploy

• Core research & research co-operation into bee migrations, Capensis Problem and other issues