

# Diversifying Honey Cultivation

Sirohi - Rajasthan

**S**irohi, a district of Rajasthan with 31% forest cover is known for its biodiversity and is an excellent source of honey production. Honey, a minor forest produce is manufactured commercially using two methods. The natural method is a primitive one, mostly adopted by the local poor people who go to the forests to collect honey produced by wild bees. However, this is not sustainable and can be challenged by a number of factors. The locals of Sirohi who engage in a primitive mode of honey collection, lack the awareness and scientific bee breeding technology training, as bee boxes, bee colonies and bee breeders were not available in Sirohi or the adjoining districts. Those who managed to acquire honey from the forest did not have linkages to potential buyers.

To address these problems and with the objective to increase the income of farmers, a strategy similar to Bharatpur's beekeeping model was devised. A beekeeping project was submitted to the Department of Horticulture to provide financial aid to the farmers. The first step of the project was to raise awareness among farmers. The Agriculture, Horticulture and Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) organised an awareness programme through





newspapers and social media. The campaign was launched at all 72 Kisan Seva Kendra to convince farmers about the benefits of beekeeping. To train the farmers, expert level institutional and field trainings on beekeeping production technique were conducted on multiple locations. To promote beekeeping in the district, 60 routine departmental training programmes were conducted. Bee breeders were registered under horticulture funded programme of beekeeping. Bee boxes and colonies were made available to the farmers. Under the government's financial assistance scheme, 405 beekeeping colonies were made available to farmers and more than 400 colonies were made without assistance.

Under the National Horticulture Mission, the bee keeping assistance was given to the farmers under certain guidelines. On honey bee colonies and boxes on unit cost, 40 percent financial assistance was given to farmers. The tenders for the project were invited through newspapers and Rajasthan State Public Procurement Portal, to maintain transparency in the supply process. Additionally, day-to-day support was extended to farmers for bee rearing and honey production process.

The project generated employment for the local youth. The success of the implementation of the project has also garnered the interest of industrialists eyeing future prospects of agro-processing sector in the district. The goal is for more than 1,000 progressive farming families in Sirohi to rear 50,000 honey bee boxes (50 boxes

#### CHALLENGE FACED

- Climate change and fluctuations are a major challenge in bee keeping as behaviour of bees quickly changes with climate; to overcome the problem, farmers and bee keepers are advised to shift colonies to suitable places

#### FINAL OUTCOMES

- Within four months of introduction, 5,000 litres of honey production was reported
- Farmers to get an additional estimated income of ₹60,000 per annum from honey production
- Production of fennel and mustard increased due to pollination by bees

per farming family) by 2022. If achieved, the district will annually contribute 20 lakh litres (40 kg per box per year) of honey to national production costing ₹2,000 lakh, at the minimum rate of ₹100 per litre. Once the production target is achieved, the prospects of honey refineries and packing industries in the region will brighten. The District Administration has also formed a farmers-producers organisation to promote the collection and marketing of honey.