

INTERCOOPERATIVE BEEKEEPING ENTERPRISES – AN EFFECTIVE FORM OF BEEKEEPING CENTRALIZATION IN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

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After World War II when our country embarked upon building socialism, the beekeeping in People's Republic of Bulgaria entered a new, higher stage.

The socialist changes taking place in agriculture also provided the possibility for the socialist sector beekeeping to advance fast: apiaries were established on the State farms, in agricultural co-operative units, in co-operative labour agricultural units, etc. By 1970, the number of bee colonies belonging to the socialist sector grew to 135 thousand, accounting for 19% of the total number existing in our country.

A higher centralization and specialization of the beekeeping sector was made possible by the establishment of apiaries belonging to the socialist sector. In 1968, on the initiative of the Central Union of Co-operative Units and of the Regional Union of Co-operative Units in Russe, the first intercooperative beekeeping unit was set up. The results obtained by it were promising and consequently eight more such units were inaugurated.

In 1970, these 9 units had 55,000 colonies, accounting for 41% of the colonies belonging to the socialist sector. The centralization of apiaries of the socialist sector continues; in the region where no intercooperative beekeeping units exists, specialized beekeeping units will be set up under the industrial agricultural complex units.

The intercooperative beekeeping units are independent juridically. Their activity proceeds in keeping with the model Statutes and on the principle of independent husbandry, non-financed by the State.

Their activity is guided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry and methodically supported by the "Nectarcoop" enterprise under the General Union of the Cooperative Units.

The intercooperative beekeeping units include 4 to 8 work teams; the work team is the basic production unit, working on the principle of independent husbandry. Each team attends to 3 to 10 apiaries in a district, each apiary having 100-140 colonies. A full-time beekeeper manages an apiary and only at the height of the season is an extra hand needed. Each unit, team and apiary has its own production financial plan. Each beekeeper is paid a salary monthly and when he exceeds the production and financial plan is also given a bonus. The team leader is paid according to the plan fulfillment rate by the whole team.

A program of training courses and meetings for exchange of experience is drawn up under the direction of the unit, for higher qualification of beekeepers and team leaders.

During the active season, the bees are moved, according to a previously established plan, to the spontaneous honey plant fields and honey crops. In 1970, the intercooperative beekeeping units in Plovdiv, Bazargic, Sliven etc. undertook migratory beekeeping and moved more than 90% of the total bee colonies in the respective districts. The reciprocal relations between the beekeeping units, the State farms and the labour cooperative agricultural units are established in the agreements concluded as follows: the management of the cooperative units bind themselves to secure free transportation, with its own means, of the bee colonies to the bee pasture; to pay 4 to 6 leva for each bee colony moved into migratory beekeeping; and to protect bees against poisoning with substances applied to protect plants, etc.

For improving and expanding the forage source, the management takes several measures: reforestation with honey trees and shrubs in the holding apiaries; parcels around them are planted with phacelia and melilot. The cooperative labour agricultural units and the State farms support the intercooperative beekeeping units in this respect by sowing saifoin, melilot and phacelia on large expanses. Sunflower is sown with corn to provide an autumn forage source. The Ministry of Silviculture and Timber Industry supplies various trees and shrubs every year – free of charge – to the intercooperative beekeeping units, socialist units and beekeeping associations.

The centralization made within the socialist beekeeping sector allows for using up-to-date, large-scale management technology. Multiple-story hives were experimented with and widely distributed to a number of intercooperative beekeeping units, accounting for between 40 and 60% of the total number of hives. Queen bees are now replaced once in two years; efficient methods are being used for spring development of colonies; the two-queen system is used in parent colonies; the comb building capability during the active season is judiciously used, with the view to obtaining a greater quantity of wax; after the main flow is over, 60% of the honey in the nest is taken out, and sugar syrup is fed to the colony, better conditions are provided and measures taken to protect the colonies from various infectious and non-infectious brood diseases, toxic agricultural chemicals, etc.

Following the centralization in the socialist beekeeping sector, the average crop of bee products per colony grew significantly. In 1969 and 1970, the following productions were recorded: centrifuged honey – 19 and 18 kg respectively; marketable wax – 300 and 360 g; and beebread – 70 and 80 g, while the average centrifuged honey production per bee colony in our country accounts for 10 kg. In a number of intercooperative beekeeping units, the results obtained were still better. In 1970, the 9,600 bee colonies of

the Sliven intercooperative beekeeping unit supplied 64 tons of honey, which means an average of 27.5 kg per bee colony; and the 2,068 bee colonies of the Varna intercooperative beekeeping unit produced 55 tons of honey – i.e. 26 kg on an average.

The experience gained during the two years since the inauguration of the first intercooperative beekeeping units proves that these enterprises are efficient, provide the possibility for scientific production management and for applying industrial technology in bee rearing.

The centralization of the socialist beekeeping sector provides for its turning into a profitable branch, and for systematic pollination of entomophilous crops on large expanses.