Proposals and recommendations addressing the key issues in beekeeping

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• to the public institutions
• to beekeepers
• to the public
Proposals to the public institutions...

1. Strict control of the licensing regime for the use of pesticides in the Republic of Bulgaria. A ban on the use of neonicotinoid pesticides. Encouraging farmers to use bee-friendly products, binding the use of such agents to farm subsidies.

2. Strict control of the implementation of Ordinance 15. Banning pesticide spraying during weekends and holidays, crops to be sprayed before 8:00 and after 19:00, with chemicals that are safe for bees. Introduction of severe sanctions against farmers engaged in illegal pesticide spraying - raising the fines, including withdrawal of agricultural subsidies. Criminalization of bee colony poisoning.

3. Establishment of bee health standing committees at all regional "Agriculture" directorates. Optimization of these committees’ working methods – timely response to bee poisoning alerts, taking and sending samples for testing, including on the weekends. Responding to signals and taking samples of pollen and bees as evidence in cases of so-called prolonged toxicity occurring after the introduction of poisonous pollen in the hive.

4. Establishment of a bee colony conservation fund, to be financed from the state budget and the fines imposed on persons or entities that have ordered plant protection, disinfection and disinsection activities while acting in bad faith. The fund will act as a mediator between beekeepers and entities, bearing the costs of the analysis under Article 13 of Regulation 15, and compensating beekeepers for damages and loss of profit.
5. Simplifying the procedure for the registration of bee colonies and ensuring its implementation in the shortest possible time.

6. Improving the quality of the queen bees and swarms produced in the country through:
   a) altering the main objectives of breeding programs. Begin selection of colonies along the paternal line. The selection of mothers and drones for mating to take place after a preliminary assessment of their origin, productivity and other economically useful qualities.
   b) Introducing strict and independent control mechanisms under Article 21 of Ordinance 47 on the breeding and productive qualities of bees and swarms produced by licensed queen breeders. Establishing an independent national expert committee on selection activity in beekeeping.
   c) Introducing strict veterinary control on the health status of the queen bees and swarms produced by the National Bee Breeding Association (NRAP). Conducting independent tests to detect nosematosis (N. apis and N. ceranae) in queen bee breeding apiaries. Imposing immediately quarantine on infected apiaries in case of nosematosis detection.
   r) Separating the breeding of queen bees from that of artificial swarms.
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7. Optimization of the 2011–2013 National Programme for the Development of Beekeeping through:
   a) Changing of priorities - from the breeding of queen bees and swarms to the purchase of drugs and hives and beekeeping equipment renewal. Change of research priorities.
   b) Optimizing of the requirements:
      - Participation of local beekeeping organizations and research teams at scientific associations.
      - Assessment by independent experts.
      - Reduction of paperwork to simplify the application of beekeepers.
      - Subjecting the application deadlines and controls to the specifics of beekeeping.
   c) Increasing the funding for beekeeper-auditors and facilitating the implementation of preventive examinations. Allowing non-district veterinarians to apply to become beekeeper-auditors.
   d) Bringing the prices of hives, bees and swarms in line with their real value.
   e) Implementation of subsequent controls of purchased bees and swarms in compliance with Article 16 of Ordinance 47 for the quality of queen bees and swarms. The sale and purchase of queen bees and swarms to require a declaration of conformity in accordance with Ordinance 47.
   f) Before each meeting of the working groups, obliging their members to sign a declaration confirming the absence of any conflict of interest.

8. Optimisation of the Young Farmer programme under the Rural Development programme to suit the needs of beekeeping.
Proposals to the public institutions

9. Improving the veterinary and scientific servicing of beekeeping by:
   a) Timely execution of the screening of colonies, including those in unregistered apiaries. Tighter control of the work of district veterinarians, as well as greater use of beekeepers-auditors.
   b) Strict control of the testing and licensing of Veterinary Medicinal Products (VMP) for the treatment of bees.
   c) Discontinuation of the sale of unlicensed VMPs in Bulgaria.
   d) VMPs for disease treatment and prevention in bees to be used only under the supervision of a veterinarian.
   e) Tightening of the veterinary control of mobile beekeeping and the border control of bees, queen bees, swarms and bee products by the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency.
   f) Conducting scientific research to detect any resistance of the varroasis agent to the preparations registered in Bulgaria. Conducting tests to detect the presence and incidence in Bulgaria of the Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), the Asian form of nosematosis (caused by Nosema ceranae), the small hive beetle, acariasis and other exotic diseases.
   g) Conducting research for the purpose of creating and registering new, highly efficient treatments against Varroa mites, nosematosis and other bee and bee brood diseases. Allocation of funds to create lines (breeds) of bees with increased resistance to certain diseases.
   h) Improving the skills of veterinarians in relation to bee pathology. Creating more laboratories specialising in bee pathology and bee product testing; Training new professionals in beekeeping, including in bee pathology, and creating a separate Institute of Apiculture that will perform all scientific and applied research in the field of beekeeping.
   i) Increased control of the announcement and destruction of infected broods and the payment of compensation in cases of American foulbrood in the country. Payment of compensation in cases of nosematosis (Nosema ceranae) and other exotic diseases.
   j) Continuous quality control of the bee products available in the shops in the country. Prompt removal from the market of fake or unsafe products and severe sanctions for the offenders.
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10. Taking emergency **measures to improve the bee pasture** in Bulgaria by:
   a) Increasing the percentage of melliferous deciduous species through reforestation under the forestry department and with the help of beekeeping organizations.
   b) Increasing the percentage of legumes in the creation of new bee pastures.
   c) Creation of parks with predominantly melliferous plants.
   d) Using melliferous species (amorpha, acacia etc.) to stabilise eroding terrains.

11. **Immediate measures against the increasing cases of theft of bee broods** in Bulgaria.
    Imposing severe sanctions on the offenders.

12. Strict regulation of the conditions for beekeeping in urban areas.

13. Relaxing the requirements for the creation of apiaries on municipal, state and forest land plots.

14. Regulation and payment of the pollination activity performed by bees.

15. **Facilitation of the direct realization of bee products** from beekeepers to consumers through:
    a) Unrestricted sales by beekeepers.
    b) Allowing the export of honey directly by beekeepers in compliance with veterinary requirements.

16. Assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food in the introduction and popularization of good beekeeping practices.
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17. Assistance from the state in improving the organizational structure of beekeeping and the qualification of beekeepers through:

a) Active cooperation between state institutions and beekeeping organizations in making statements, preparation of important documents, establishment of working groups etc.

b) Establishment of clear rules for the national recognition of beekeeping associations.

c) Supporting institutions in the organization of beekeeping lectures and courses with renowned experts in the field of beekeeping.

18. Support from the state to increase the domestic consumption of honey and other bee products:

a) Conducting a massive advertising campaign of the benefits of bee products, as well as supporting the organization of bazaars, fairs and exhibitions of bee products.

b) Creation of a registered Bulgarian honey trademark.
Recommendations to beekeepers and beekeeping organizations

1. Beekeeping organizations should:
   a) Contribute actively to the registration of the colonies and the improving of the skills of its members.
   b) Promote more actively the interests of beekeepers.
   c) Organize simultaneous treatments for diseases at regional and municipal level.
   d) To organize the registration of designations of origin for national and regional bee products.
   e) To initiate campaigns to promote bee products.

2. In the breeding of bees and the production of bee products, beekeepers should:
   a) Develop their skills by attending courses and lectures and keeping themselves informed of the latest developments in beekeeping.
   b) Learn and implement good beekeeping practices.
   c) Discontinue the unlawful treatment of bee colonies with unlicensed veterinary medicinal products.
   d) Not produce fake honey or other bee products.
   e) Be more proactive, apply for beekeeping assistance programs.
   f) Support all initiatives to improve and increase bee pasture.
1. Beekeeping is an important branch of agriculture. Without the pollination activity of bees many fruit and vegetables are threatened by dying off.

2. Beekeeping is a specific combination of intellectual work and hard physical labor. It takes a lifetime to learn.

3. Change the attitude towards bees. Bees do colossal work that no man or machine can do. People only use their goods. If bees disappear, humans will disappear as well.

4. Beekeepers perform an activity that is important for society. If there is an apiary nearby and the bees are troubling you, try to reach an agreement with the owner. He or she can move the hives farther, turn the entrances of the hives in another direction, put a fence etc. Be aware that the deliberate poisoning of bees is a crime.

5. **Consume regularly honey, pollen and royal jelly** and use goods containing bee products. The gifts of bees have been used for ages not only for treatment but also for general strengthening of the body and for prevention of many diseases.

6. **Prefer products with proven Bulgarian origin** to stimulate domestic production.

7. **Bee honey crystallization is a natural process** that does not spoil the taste and biological properties of honey. Most types of honey crystallize. Only acacia and honeydew honey may not crystallize over a year.

8. If you have bought honey which you suspect is false or has been a victim of misleading advertising (e.g. it says "natural honey" in big letters and "blend of honey with a sweetener" in small letters below), report immediately to the Commission for Consumer Protection, the Food Safety Agency and other relevant bodies.

9. The media should promote more actively the benefits of bees and bee products.
Thank you for your attention!