

## Sharing and exchanging information about key aspects of beekeeping

### UNDP-ART GOLD Lebanon Supports Lebanon's Beekeepers

More than 3000 beekeepers of North Lebanon, South Lebanon and the Bekaa region are benefiting from an initiative spearheaded by UNDP-ART GOLD Lebanon in support of the honey value chain in Lebanon.



Lebanon's beekeepers are approximately 5300, of which 4000 depend on beekeeping for a living. Beekeeping and honey production is a vital sector in Lebanon with a strategically important potential for competitiveness and sustainable development. The sector; however, is increasingly deteriorating given the polluted environment, the reduced planted acreage and the climate change implications in addition to the impact of toxic pesticides which contribute to the killing of bees.



The Honey value chain showed clear strategic and competitive potential, and they can be considered as a priority for the ART GOLD Lebanon Programme. Strategic value for economic development and competitive advantage factors for sustainable long-term development are key elements justifying this choice.

The strategic value consists generally in the high production volumes, and the correspondent high number of people involved in the chain, the importance for the Lebanese traditional food (because of their high nutritive and health value), and the links already existing between the primary, the secondary and the service sectors.

In order to provide technical assistance to the small farmers, we have planned to work in the establishment of the National Consortium of Lebanese beekeepers, in the framework of the activities to be realized for the honey value chain. In the territories that UNDP AGL is operative there are many associations,



syndicates and small groups or individual producers that are working without any kind of coordination between them and the development politics of the Government. The establishment of the National Consortium will help the category of small farmers to better organize their efforts in working with Government as a unify body and not in individual or provincial bases.

UNDP –ARTGOLD Lebanon has been supporting the Beekeeping and honey production sector jointly with the Ministry of Agriculture since 2008. Local cooperatives and associations of beekeepers, and the Association of Umbria Beekeepers in Italy are equally involved in this initiative. Other main partners are key beekeepers from North and South Lebanon and the Bekaa region that were trained as part of this project, and act as focal point for sharing knowledge and learned practices with other beekeepers.

Since the launch of the beekeeping project, an Italian expert from Umbria beekeeping Association has continuously exchanged information with the Lebanese beekeepers and provided them with needed technical training. His contributions fall within the decentralized cooperation partnerships that ART GOLD strongly advocates and embarks on to help strengthen local capacities, and exchange best practices and technical assistance, contributing to local development.



Tarek Yassine, Head of Jabal Amel Beekeepers Cooperatives of 300 beekeepers, has been practicing beekeeping in south Lebanon for more than 25 years. Tarek was among the 200 beekeepers selected and trained as part of this initiative. “The much-needed trainings we received on disease control and beekeeping

management helped improve the technical quality of our honey,” said Tarek.

Several other Lebanese beekeepers traveled to Italy during 2009 and 2010 to learn from their fellow Italians about best practices in this field. “The Italian experience particularly equipped us with broader insights in dealing with our beekeeping problems,” Tarek added.

As part of this project, online software was provided to the Ministry of Agriculture to help manage beekeeping information more efficiently. Other efforts entailed supporting the ministry in drafting the beekeeping law and decree to control antibiotic use aided by an Italian expert in beekeeping.