Who am I? My name is Tobias Bruning, 33 year old, and a very passionate beekeeper. My dream has always been to run a beekeeping company and after dedicating the last four years entirely to the bees it is time to start off on my own.

My goal is to create a financial stable company called Mella Apiculture, to increase my market share and to realize a steady grow of my operations over the next few years. First, I will target the local market that is looking for traditional bee products showing le terroir Francaise et la tradtion apicole. But, with an eye on the future and larger sales, I will also make sure my product will be adaptable to target the heart of the market. This niche shows a great unfulfilled demand for everyday artisan bee products for a reasonable price.

To sustain all this I will let my company gradually grow with 200 hives a year and expand the yearly honey production with 6 tons. This will result in a yearly grow of 200% of the résultat net.

By writing this business plan I want to make the goals of my company clear and put them to paper. Besides that I want, based on this plan to start my beekeeping company, apply for a credit of 45.000 Euros.

I can speak four languages. I can speak Dutch & English fluently and French & German at an intermediate level. A handy skill for cross border business.

Beekeeping is my passion and after four years of total dedication to the bees it is time to start off on my own. The last few years I have been learning a lot about the bees. By doing a training, reading, trial and error and working with one of the most skilled beekeepers of France I can now confidently call myself a true beekeeper with a clear vision of how to run a successful beekeeping company. This has been my dream for many years. I have always liked the autonomy of being my own boss, to be successful and being rewarded for the hard work I am willing to put in.

My background in hospitality and beekeeping has given me a perfect set of theoretical and practical skills to run the company.

For the theoretical, business management, side of the company I have experience at management level and know-how of business administration, marketing, sales, strategic management, service management, personnel management, business organization, research etc.

On the other side, having worked for almost 20 years in various jobs on the work floor has also given me some important practical skills necessary for a good running beekeeping operation. I have a hands-on mentality, look ahead and organize my work efficiently to avoid stressful situations. These are crucial in the busy harvesting months. I also manage to work very fast without loosing the delicate touch to handle bees and always keep an eye on the details.

There are also traits I have to keep an eye on. I can, for instance, be too punctual. Loosing too much time on making things perfect instead of moving ahead. Or I can be patient too long without getting firm with someone.

I want to make a decent living by selling bee products but it does not have to make me rich. The bees make some unique products, like honey, bees wax, propolis, pollen and royal jelly that can not be artificially made. Often these products are considered a little bit of an luxury item but I want to make sure these products are available to everyone and that everyone is aware of the importance and wellbeing of bees. I want to make sure we can enjoy the products now but also our children and all the generations to come. Because without the bees our world would look a lot different.

*The Mission of Mella Apiclture is to provide bee products with a 360° bon-sens.*

With Mella Apiculture I will strive for a modern age balanced business approach with 360° fairness. In my opinion no element in or around Mella Apiculture can do without another so all must look out for each other to guarantee long-term livability for all. My goal is to provide everyday artisan bee products for a reasonable price while making consumers aware of the company values. By earning consumers trust I will enlarge my market share and secure a steady business.

Enlarge my market share by;

* Offering bee products which show le terroir Francaise et la tradtion apicole
* A suitable mid-scale pricing strategy.
* Presenting my products at the right place through direct and indirect sales.
* Launching a brand that catches the attention of my market.

Structural growth of my company by;

* By 200 hives a year
* Increase the honey production by 6 tons a year
* Building the Miellerie in stages.

Securing the financial stability by;

* Rendement des capitaux propres of at least 50% after taxes
* Autonomie financière facteur of at least 35%
* Marge brute d'exploitation of minimal 60%

I will establish myself at the farm of my dear parents Paul & Bianca in Laguian-Mazous. This tiny village is situated on the border of the departments Gers and the Haute Pyrenees right in Gascony area at the foot of the Pyrenees. This is an unique location for a beekeeper because it sets me right in the middle of many mayor honey crops. The sunflower and rapeseed in the Gers, and the Acacia, Chestnut and lime tree in the Haute Pyrenees.

The miellerie will build in an unused barn of 280m2 which I can rent from my parents. It has the capacity to house a 1600 hives beekeeping company. I believe my investments in the miellerie should grow together with the company size. Therefore it has been designed to be build in stages with operations starting in just one corner.

To start of with, I will, avec mes production limitée, portera principalement sur les **«Terroiristes»** vendre des produits traditionels dans les circuits courts comme la ventes sur place et marchés local. This will be more labor intensive but the revenues will be higher as well. However, with a bigger production in the near future I need to look ahead for chances.

As the research of France Agrimer concludes the fragmentation of the market is felt by consumers because it creates oppositions between different poles:

Generally speaking there is more then enough space to position myself on the French market.

Au le niveau de concurrence local there are four professional beekeepers in a 25 km radius (of which three close to retirement). This seems a lot but no one can really be considered a direct competitor since there are significant differences in product, price, promotion and distribution.

Take for instance **Domaine Apicole du Pillardon**. They really focus on the épicuriens and sell their top quality honey in very expensive boutiques in Paris and to tourists in Bassous from their home.

On the other hand **Jean Paul Cazaux Apiculture** is focusing on mass production and sells most of his honey en vrac. He does sell some honey in the GMS in the Mirande area but he does that the same way as he has done for 35 years without putting a lot of effort in his marketing strategy.

The same goes for **Les Ruchers du Samazan**. This small family business focuses on the «Terroiristes» but keeps a very low profile. They do not actively sell their products besides the market in Vic-en-Bigorre and from their home. Like Jean Paul Cazaux they do not have a website.

Then there is **Api-Culture** in Tarbes. They mainly focus themselves on the Tarbes area and the tourism in the Pyrenees. They did put a lot of effort in their marketing and product wise you could say they are making their way to the heart of the market was it not that they keep holding on to the «Terroiristes» prices.

I will distinguish myself from my colleagues by listening to the market and offering a artisanal product with a strong brand accessible to everyone for daily consumption.

To start of with in the first year I will sell a small range of bee products that can be expected at a market stand, showing **le terroir Francaise** et **la tradtion apicole**. But with an eye on the future and larger sales I will make sure that the honey line also adaptés à la grande distribution.

For my marché visé, les «Terroiristes», I will stick to a **prix mythique**; it has to represent the image that les «Terroiristes» have with un produit de terroir, artisanaux et originés but it also needs to be able to make a bridge to le « trou noir » en cœur de marché.. It does not need to be a practical low price because that is not the critical point that makes our buyers chose our product. The price must also not be that high that it is going to represent a produit rares avec une valeur esthétique.

As mentioned before, the way to reach the «Terroiristes» is through les circuits courts with a personal contact. I will do that in several ways;

* **Ventes sur place** à la ferme.
* **Marchés** that do not have a permanent honey seller yet;
  + Marciac, mercredi
  + Villecomtal-sur-Arros, vendredi
* **Braderies**;
  + Vide greniers, dimanche
  + Evenements special; Marciac Jazz, Fête du Fromagers de Saint Arailles, Les Floralies de Tillac etc.

To make my way towards le « trou noir » en cœur de marché I will use a more modern and functional way of distribution.

* Ventes par **internet**
  + Site web de Mella Apiculture
  + Site web ‘Bienvenue à la Ferme’ & ‘Achater à la Source’
* Ventes par le ‘**Abonement du Miel**’
  + This is the latest trend to reach your market. To receive our products our loyal customers can subscribe themselves to a abonnément of their liking and get the honey delivered right to the doorstep. This makes it easier for them and guarantees us of steady sales.
* **Magasins spécialisés**
  + Any shop that is willing to sell our artisanaux products on the side. Think of boulangeries, camping shops, Pépinières with a food corner etc.
* **Grandes et moyennes surfaces** alentours

The promotion is very important to me. It is the way I can communicate with my customers. The first year my focus will be on enlarging the clientele in the local area. I will do this by **launching a brand** that shows Mella Apiculture’s identity (un produit de terroir, artisanaux et originés) and values (360 fairness) so it is recognizable for our market.

Next I will make sure I am at the place where I can engage my customers and make them aware of Mella Apiculture’s products with a **giveaway sample** like honey sticks. After getting to know my customers and earning their trust I will let the most powerful promotion tool of the Gers do it’s work; the **word-of-mouth advertising**.

Looking ahead I will also promote Mella Apiculture Online. First of all I will launch a **website** where my customers and anyone interested can find information about Mella Apiculture and the products I sell. The goal will be to get this website on the top of the search results when looking for honey in the Gers. I also want to share my story and knowledge with a blog and through **social media** like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. I believe this will add an additional value to the experience of my bee products and it is a great way to give name to my company. To do all this I am lucky to say that the advertising agency Clean Graphics of my very talented friend Boaz van der Zeep will take care of all graphical, website and social media designs.