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**INTRODUCTION**

Apiculture or beekeeping is the maintenance of honeybee colonies, usually in hives, by humans. Beekeepers usually maintain colonies of the western honeybee, *Apis mellifera,* which is the most commonly domesticated bee species. Honeybees are kept for their honey, beeswax, and other products, as well as for their pollination services. Beekeeping is an ancient practice, dating back thousands of years. Honey and beeswax were prized by ancient civilizations for their sweet taste, medicinal qualities, and other uses. Today, beekeeping is a popular hobby and a growing industry, especially as concerns about declining bee populations have raised awareness of the importance of bees for pollination and agriculture.

Beekeeping involves caring for honeybee colonies, which includes managing their hives, feeding them, protecting them from disease and pests, and harvesting honey and other products. Beekeepers must have a good understanding of bee behavior, nutrition, and health, as well as practical skills such as hive construction, honey extraction, and pest control. Beekeeping can be a rewarding and profitable activity, providing honey and other products for personal use or sale. It also plays an important role in agriculture, as bees are essential for pollinating many crops, including fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds.

However, beekeeping also comes with challenges, such as diseases, pests, and weather conditions that can affect bee health and productivity. Additionally, bees can be dangerous to people with allergies or who are not familiar with bee behavior. Beekeepers must take precautions to protect themselves and others when working with bees. Overall, beekeeping is an important practice with many benefits, both for beekeepers and society as a whole.

**ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF APICULTURE**

Beekeeping, also known as apiculture, is a practice that has been around for centuries, and its economic importance cannot be overemphasized. Bees play a crucial role in the pollination of crops and the production of honey and other products. Furthermore, beekeeping has both direct and indirect effects on the economy, making it a valuable sector to invest in. Beekeeping is economically important.

Firstly, beekeeping contributes to food security and nutrition. Bees play a vital role in the pollination of crops, which is essential for the production of fruits, vegetables, nuts, and other plant-based foods. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), over 70% of the world's crops depend on pollinators, mainly bees. Without bees, many food crops would fail to produce fruits or seeds, leading to reduced yields and lower food quality. In addition, honey produced by bees is a nutritious food that is rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.

Secondly, beekeeping is an important source of income and employment. In many countries, beekeeping is a vital part of the rural economy. Beekeeping provides a source of income for small-scale farmers and rural communities and creates employment opportunities for beekeepers, apiary workers, and honey processors. For example, in Nigeria, beekeeping provides employment for over two million people and generates over $1 million annually. In addition, the sale of honey and beeswax provides an additional source of income for beekeepers and their families.

Thirdly, beekeeping has significant economic benefits for the environment. Bees are important pollinators, and the pollination of crops and wild plants is critical for maintaining ecological balance and ecosystem services. In addition, honey bees contribute to biodiversity by pollinating wild plants and thus supporting the populations of other animals that depend on these plants. By promoting beekeeping, governments and communities can help protect ecosystems and support sustainable development.

Hence, the key ways beekeeping contributes to the economy can be highlighted as thus:

* **Honey Production:** Honey is a natural and healthy sweetener that is used in a wide range of foods and drinks. Beekeeping is the primary way of producing honey, which is a profitable sector globally. According to a report by Grand View Research, the global honey market size was valued at USD 8.4 billion in 2019 and is expected to grow at a CAGR of 8.0% from 2020 to 2027. Beekeeping contributes to this market by producing high-quality honey that meets market demand.
* **Pollination**: Bees play a crucial role in pollinating crops, which makes beekeeping important in agriculture. It is estimated that about 35% of the global food crop production depends on pollinators like bees. Therefore, beekeeping is an essential activity that enhances food production and food security in the world.
* **Beeswax production:** Beeswax is another valuable product derived from beekeeping. Beeswax is used in various sectors like cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and candles, among others. According to a report by Mordor Intelligence, the global beeswax market was valued at USD 275.2 million in 2019. Beekeeping contributes to this market by producing high-quality beeswax that meets market demand.
* **Tourism**: Beekeeping can also be an attraction for tourists, who are interested in learning about beekeeping practices. For countries that have a rich history of beekeeping, bee tourism can be an excellent opportunity to generate revenue and promote their culture.

Conclusively, beekeeping is an essential activity that has significant economic importance. It contributes to the global honey, beeswax, and pollination markets, enhances food production, and promotes tourism. It is, therefore, important that beekeepers are supported to produce high-quality products that meet market demand and contribute to the global economy. As the world faces challenges such as climate change and food insecurity, the importance of beekeeping and other sustainable practices cannot be overemphasized.

**BEEKEEPING POTENTIAL OF RAISING THE INCOME AND NUTITIONAL LEVEL OF RURAL PEOPLE**

Apiculture or beekeeping is the practice of maintaining honeybees for the purpose of collecting honey, pollen, beeswax, propolis, and royal jelly. This activity is gaining more attention as an economic activity to reduce rural poverty and improve nutritional levels. Nigeria is known to be the largest producer of honey in Africa, with an annual production of about 30,000 metric tons of honey, according to the National Honey Board of Nigeria. The potential of apiculture on improving the nutritional and income level of poor rural people cannot be overemphasized.

Primarily, Honey and other bee products are rich sources of nutrients like vitamins, minerals, enzymes, and antioxidants. Hence, the consumption of bee products can significantly improve the nutritional status of the local population. Honey is a natural sweetener that provides energy and is a healthier substitute for sugar. The daily use of honey has been shown to improve the digestive system and boost the immune system, which can lead to consistent health positively. Pollen, on the other hand, is rich in protein, vitamins, and minerals, and can help address nutrient deficiencies. Propolis, a resin-like substance collected by bees from trees, is known for its antibacterial properties and helps promote oral health (Gupta and Mittal, 2021).

Additionally, Apiculture can be practiced both in rural and urban areas, and this makes it attractive to communities looking to diversify their agricultural activities. This activity doesn't require large land areas, so small farmers or landless people can also engage in it. The high demand for honey in both local and international markets has created numerous job opportunities and training for rural folks, especially those with small farms or low yields.

Furthermore, Beekeeping is a lucrative business as honey, beeswax, propolis, and royal jelly are high-value products. Beeswax is used in the production of cosmetics, candles, and other products. Rural communities can take advantage of the high demand for these products and sell beeswax, thereby increasing their income. For a family, the sale of honey or beeswax can provide a steady income source throughout the year. It is estimated that every beehive has the potential to generate $200 annually, and with proper management, this figure can be higher. According to a study by Seeds for Africa, beekeeping could potentially generate an income of $3,000 per annum for an average family, which would make a significant impact on rural households’ livelihoods (Seeds for Africa, 2020). With the increasing demand for organic products, honey and other bee products are becoming increasingly sought after. Poor rural people can participate in international trade, thereby increasing their income and improving their livelihoods.

Also, Beekeeping can also offer environmental and ecological benefits to the local communities. Bees play a significant role in pollinating wildflowers, thus promoting biodiversity. Apiculture has the potential to maintain ecological balance by preserving habitats and conserving endangered species. Bees are excellent pollinators, and the more bees there are; the more pollination takes place. This translates into increased agricultural productivity and biodiversity. Hence, apiculture is useful in protecting, promoting, and restoring vegetation.

Several studies have found a correlation between beekeeping and improved nutritional and income levels of rural communities. A study conducted in Ethiopia found that beekeeping significantly improved food security and income levels of poor rural households (*Tadesse et al.,* 2014). Another study in Tanzania found that beekeeping contributed to poverty reduction and improved the nutritional status of children (Nielsen *et al.,* 2011). Hence, beekeeping is an essential force in the betterment of rural people nutritional and income status.

**CONCLUSION**

Conclusively, from the review beekeeping can help reduce rural poverty and improve nutritional levels. It can generate income, provide a source of food, offer ecological benefits, and diversify agriculture. Apiculture offers an excellent opportunity for the development of rural areas, and its potential benefits cannot be underestimated.

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