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The beekeeping sector plays a crucial role in European agriculture, not only in honey production but also in pollination and biodiversity conservation. However, a growing challenge is the declining participation of younger generations in both national and international beekeeping activities. The European beekeeping community is experiencing a demographic shift, with an increasing proportion of older beekeepers and fewer young individuals entering the field. This study discusses whether this aging trend poses a significant challenge to the sustainability and resilience of the sector and explores its potential long-term implications for agriculture.

To investigate this issue, a survey was distributed through the networks of the National B-THENET Centers across 13 European countries. The survey collected both official data on the age distribution of beekeepers and expert insights into the causes and consequences of this demographic shift. Expert opinions were gathered on challenges in attracting younger generations, and the impact of an aging workforce in the sector. Additionally, information on programs and initiatives aimed at supporting young beekeepers were collected.

The analysis of official data revealed a pronounced aging trend, with beekeepers under the age of 40 representing less than 15% of the total number of beekeepers in most countries. According to the experts, barriers to youth engagement in beekeeping include limited access to land, high start-up costs, and competition from alternative career paths, particularly in urban areas. Experts noted that many younger beekeepers tend to start as hobbyists or combine beekeeping with other professional activities, limiting the scale of their operations. These findings highlight the need for targeted policies and support mechanisms to encourage youth participation in beekeeping. Further research and discussion are essential to develop effective strategies that ensure the sector's long-term sustainability in European agriculture.

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