

PP-523 [Beekeeping for Rural Development]
Twenty-eight years of National Apiculture Programme - what has evolved in Portuguese beekeeping

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Beekeeping is an agricultural activity, but its marked specificity conditions its integration into Common Agricultural Policy. In fact, the aid provided by the CAP is linked to land use and is paid on the surface, which makes it impossible to create viable aid for the beekeeping sector: In Portugal, the majority of Portuguese apiaries are installed on other people's properties.

In 1997, the European Union, through Regulation (EC) No. 1221/97, established a specific support program for the beekeeping sector (three years), with the aim of (1) supporting consolidation as an economic activity that contributes to rural development, (2) reinforcing the production and quality of honey produced by European beekeepers, (3) balancing the European trade balance and (4) combating the spread of Varroosis in the Member States and the problems raised by this disease in the production of quality honey.

However, after implementing nine three-year programs, it is important to understand how they contributed to the evolution, transformation and modernization of the beekeeping sector in Portugal.

Twenty-eight years since the start of implementation of this support tool, we analysed data relating to (1) its financial and material execution, (2) the evolution of the sector (demography, structure and size of farms, diversification of production) and relating (3) the national, community and global honey market (production, price, trade balance, economic value).

This allow us to assess whether and what results were obtained:

- how Portuguese beekeepers are like today and what constraints they have at a technical level;
- what progress has occurred on honey quality?
- has honey production increased?
- Is Varroosis "under control"?
- Is the honey market more regulated?

The data collected, and the answers they provided, gave us tools to propose the readjustment of the objectives, measures and beneficiaries of the Portuguese National Apiculture Programme, to the current demands of the beekeeping sector and sectoral policy.