



Apiculture Input Supply System Development: Lessons from ASPIRE

Background

Ethiopia has a diverse and unique natural and cultivated flora that is suitable for beekeeping. This has helped to put the country among the top 10 honey producers in the world.

In the past, there was no operational framework that supplied apiculture equipment or inputs; limited availability of inputs and access to them; and there were quality control issues in relation to framed hives. These factors contributed to the limited expansion of the apiculture industry in the country.

SNV's intervention in the sector revealed the huge potential for apiculture development, and its significance for improving the livelihoods of many citizens, particularly women and young people. SNV's main focus has been to strengthen the system so that it ensures a supply of efficient inputs.

The goal

The aim of the ASPIRE project has been to engage with about 30,000 targeted beekeepers and their followers (who use subsistent and traditional beekeeping practices), and transform them into semi-commercialised businesses.

Central to the transformation of beekeepers is the design and development of the apiculture value chain with new production processes, the production of wax, collaboration with distant actors such as honey exporters, and strengthening the capacities of actors such as input suppliers. It has also strengthened the capacity to produce transitional and framed beehives, protective clothing for beekeepers, the multiplication of bee colonies and so on. ASPIRE piloted different input supply approaches with good results and lessons that can be scaled-up nationally.

These approaches include a lead input supply scheme; the use of lead beekeeping farmers as local suppliers of transitional beehives, wax, and bee colony business development; women and youth enterprises as input suppliers; and the supply of inputs and service packages as an embedded service provided by the private sector.

Farmers as local input suppliers and colony business development

Lead input supply system

Woman and youth enterprise skills development

Inputs as embedded service

Figure 1: Input supply approaches

The solutions and results

Lead input supply system: This system helps to build collaborative networks between input suppliers located in different regional clusters for an effective outreach service, and to enhance access to inputs. ASPIRE identified 141 candidate input suppliers from different clusters in the country. Twenty-six were selected using predetermined criteria. ASPIRE facilitated business development training for the input suppliers, and helped them establish links with national-level suppliers. Input suppliers were also supported with developing business plans, promotional strategies for products and services, and setting up premises. They were coached at central level and at their premises; and supported with business development, networking, and the cost of promoting their businesses and accessing sample inputs for display.

Performance summaries of 14 suppliers in 2016 and 2017 show that they supplied different inputs to more than 5,000 farmers in many woredas, with a value of ETB 9.2 million. The value of individual suppliers' two-year sales ranged from ETB 37,500 to ETB 2.16 million, with an average annual sale value of about ETB 658,000 (see Figure 2).

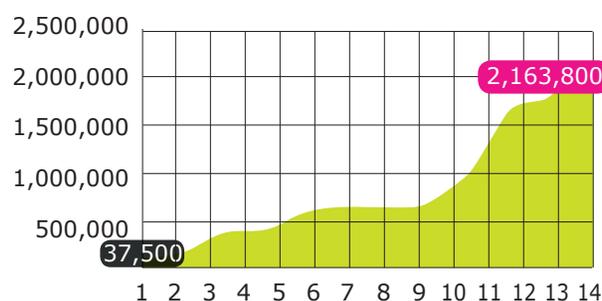


Figure 2: Individual suppliers' two-year sales

Farmers as local input suppliers and colony business development: About 89 lead semi-commercial beekeepers were coached in technical and business competence, and were linked with colony buyers. They supplied bee colonies and hives, as well as other services in their respective areas. About 1,647 beekeepers were also trained in bee colony multiplication and multiplied about 3,273 colonies in 2015. This was a considerable source of income, as the price per colony was between ETB 1,250 and ETB 2,000 in some areas.

Women and youth enterprise skills development: ASPIRE supported centrally organised skill-enhancement training for women and young people. A total of 64 women and young people were trained in making hives and protective clothing, in collaboration with regional training centres. Framed hive-making training was provided to selected enterprises in the different clusters in Sodo and Mizan technology centres; and protective cloth-making training was provided in Hawassa and Bahir Dar TVET centres. With their enhanced capacity, the trainers expanded their businesses. For example, Yeshewaget Teshome, one of the trainees from Gewatta woreda, produced and sold 22 bee veils and 22 pairs of overalls. Because of the training and the support they received from ASPIRE, their attitude shifted towards expanding their input supply business.

Inputs as embedded service: The supply of inputs as an embedded service is one of the options of quality input supply to beekeepers. Yerkisho PLC used an ETB 3.2 million investment loan that was provided to 572 beekeepers to help access modern and transitional hives, protective clothes, veils and gloves using the ASPIRE loan facility. Similarly, Babich PLC invested ETB 3.35 million

on loan for apiculture equipment that was supplied to 682 target beekeepers. The equipment included hives (533 frame and 498 transitional hives), queen excluders, protective clothing, veils and gloves. Also, Zembaba Unions invested about ETB 2.3 million on loan to provide apiculture inputs, such as bee colonies, wax, smokers, veils and full apiculture farming equipment to 956 farmers.



Lessons learned

- **Multifaceted, complementary market-based input supply system:** ASPIRE promoted complementary input supply options, which increased outreach, accessibility, assured quality and filled gaps. Such a model works better where there are many context variations on the ground, which is the case in Ethiopia.
- **Front-end guidance and hands-on support:** ASPIRE provided apiculture input producers/suppliers with initial hands-on training/coaching, networking, and material and financial support. Monitoring was carried out on the implementation and realisation of outcomes. Moreover, the credit guarantee as an embedded service is an important lesson in how to break the capital resource constraint.

ASPIRING to become a national brand...

Workinesh Kebede, a 43-year-old wife and mother of three, has been working in the apiculture input supply business for a long time. At various points over the years, Workinesh thought she was wasting her time, but her commitment and love of the work kept her going. Workinesh's fortunes changed in 2013, when ASPIRE helped her get a grant to strengthen her business: 'Everything has changed in my life and business since ASPIRE came into the picture of transforming the sector, making me see the fruit of my hard work', Workinesh remarks.

With the grant money she received, she bought two sewing machines, which helped her to make huge quantities of protective clothing that is used in apiculture. ASPIRE also facilitated links with local input suppliers, beekeepers and key actors in the sub-sector, which gave her the confidence to increase her output and diversify her product range.

Workinesh makes veils, protective clothing (overalls) and gloves, and used to sell about 400 of each item every year. Workinesh points out that 'The major benefit obtained from



ASPIRE was to get connected with various private sectors and public offices that are relevant for beekeeping. Since ASPIRE, I started seeing the result of my 18 years of hard work. Until now, I have reached about 5,000 farmers. The significant portion of the progress was ASPIRE's contribution. Can you see what the project means to my business? Now, I support the living expenses of my family, and my products help a number of beekeepers'.

To expand her outreach, she is currently working with 10 outlets in four regions (Amhara, Oromia, Tigray and SNNPR). Workinesh has set her sights high: 'Because of ASPIRE, I now have a vision to become one of the best-known bee equipment suppliers in the country.'