

PROMOTION OF THE BEEKEEPING SECTOR WITHIN COMMUNITIES IN THE MAYA BIOSPHERE RESERVE, PETÉN, GUATEMALA

TL3 GT

» Context and challenges

In Guatemala, beekeeping represents an important economic activity for income generation, and constitutes an alternative for agricultural diversification. Due to the climatic characteristics and the different ecosystems in the department of Petén, beekeeping production has a lot of potential, considering also that for the Maya people the collection of honey from native bees was traditional. Unfortunately, land-use changes for intensive agricultural and cattle raising purposes implies the use of agrochemicals, affecting the productive potential of beekeeping. In addition, legal restrictions in protected areas (PA) that occupy a large part of the Petén department have limited the development of the activity. In this context, the Protection and Sustainable Use of the

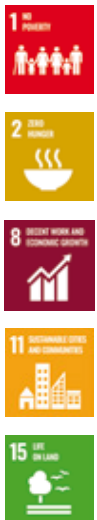
Selva Maya Project has been promoting beekeeping in the Maya Biosphere Reserve (MBR) since 2012. Through a participatory strategic planning process, honey was selected as one of the products with the potential to improve income, community well-being and forest conservation. The intervention led to the creation of the *Mesa de Miel*, a multisectoral platform for the political, economic and commercial management of the beekeeping sector in Petén. The platform successfully advocated a change in the legal framework for the activity in protected areas and strengthened the technical and organizational capacities of existing groups of beekeepers, as well as new ones.

Beneficiaries

Local community groups in and around protected areas dedicated to and interested in beekeeping.



Impacts



- ◆ The consolidation of the *Mesa de Miel*, which is recognized at the local and national level, provides a coordination and governance space for decision-making aimed at the development of the beekeeping sector in Petén.
- ◆ Thanks to the political impact achieved, today beekeeping is included in the MBR Master Plan, as a productive activity allowed in forest concessions with resident population.
- ◆ By strengthening capacities through workshops, training courses and exchange of experiences with some 50 producers from six communities, beekeepers now have more knowledge about beekeeping, which contributes to the diversification of their activities and to increasing their income.
- ◆ Didactic material has been created that guarantees the dissemination of knowledge while promoting awareness among other community groups.
- ◆ Equipment and operating resources have been purchased to promote and strengthen the activity in the three concessions within protected areas with local communities.





Formation of the inter-institutional working group and analysis of the legal basis of beekeeping

To foster the beekeeping sector in Petén in 2012, an inter-institutional working group was formed, and to visualize the legal basis and opportunities for the development of beekeeping within PAs in the department of Petén, an analysis was conducted in 2014. In this diagnostic it was confirmed that the Africanized bee (*Apis mellifera*) was classified as an “exotic species” in Guatemala, so that the existing legal framework restricted honey production within protected areas as it was considered as an illegal activity. In view of the economic and ecological potential of beekeeping in the MBR, the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP) was presented with the analysis and a proposal to change the status of *Apis mellifera* from the black to the white list in 2014 and to include beekeeping in the Master Plan of the MBR.

Enabling factors: Interest of institutions and organizations in supporting beekeeping as a trigger for local economic development. Commitment and coordination between governmental and civil society institutions.



Formation of the Petén Mesa de Miel

The inter-institutional working group formed the *Mesa de Miel*, a multisectoral platform led by the Ministry of Agriculture (MAGA) and integrated by regulators and support organizations. The *Mesa de Miel* developed a normative proposal to the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) to implement beekeeping in PAs.

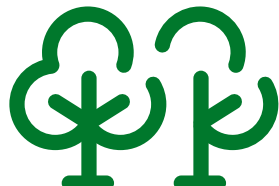
Enabling factors: The openness of MAGA, as well as the involvement of non-governmental organizations have been very valuable in financing, training and providing technical and legal assistance to beekeepers.



Creation of the Petén Beekeepers Guild Association and development of beekeeping in forest concessions

The *Mesa de Miel* supported the consolidation of beekeeping groups through the creation of the Petén Beekeepers Guild Association (AGAPI). Its objective is to consolidate the beekeeping sector by establishing agreements with governmental and non-governmental bodies, as well as through the integration and organization of producers, also serving as an information, training and representation space. Additionally, support for equipment and technical assistance has strengthened the beekeeping activity in forest concessions.

Enabling factors: AGAPI has enabled progress in the proper management of hives and in the management of needs and demands. The exchange of experience between beekeepers fostered an atmosphere of solidarity and trust.



The analysis of the legal situation of beekeeping in protected areas (1) allowed to visualize areas of opportunity which led to the formation of an inter-institutional working group and to the inclusion of beekeeping in the MBR Master Plan. The *Mesa de Miel* (2) proposed the regulations to the legislative entities, supported the creation of AGAPI and facilitated the implementation of exchanges, workshops and training; promoting beekeeping within forest concessions (3).

» Story

“The support of the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Selva Maya Project was important to diversify productive activities through integrated sustainable management and administrative capacity building. One of the relevant actions of the project was to promote, together with MAGA, NGOs and producers, the creation of the *Mesa de Miel*, a space for coordination and political advocacy. Among the concrete results of the *Mesa de Miel*, it is worth mentioning the inclusion of beekeeping in the MBR Master Plan; the creation of AGAPI, which consists of eight grassroots organizations; and support for the



strengthening of beekeeping management capacities through workshops and exchange of experience in the Community Forest Organizations within the Multiple Use Zone of the MBR. International Cooperation must be considered in the political agenda to support the continuity of the community forestry process within the Selva Maya. As long as the communities have direct economic benefits from forest management there will be conservation of the Selva Maya!”

Julio Javier Madrid Cruz, Coordinator for Non-Timber Products, Association of Forest Communities of Petén ACOFOP/Community Forest Company FORESCOM.

