



**TAKING CARE OF BEES**  
**BY SUPPORTING FAIRTRADE**  
**BEEKEEPERS**



Bees are linked primarily to their capacity to produce honey, beeswax and propolis. However, their main contribution involves the extraordinary role they play in the environment. Bees are vitally important for life on Earth, they are the guardians of ecosystems, and they promote the biodiversity of species. Bees play a fundamental role in the reproductive life of ecosystems, and consequently in the survival of humanity. Thus, an increase in bee mortality is a clear indicator of the degradation of biodiversity.

## BEES ARE THE MOST VALUABLE POLLINATOR IN THE WORLD

Pollination is the transfer of pollen grains from a flower's male organs to its female organs. This process is essential to produce many crops, including almonds, apples, avocados, cranberries, and cherries.

There are crops that are totally dependent on pollination, and for many others, their productivity and quality is significantly increased when they are pollinated by insects. In fact, crop harvests vary according to the degree of benefit received from pollination (1). Intervention by pollinators creates the necessary conditions for the growth of nearly 85% of the Earth's cultivated plants (2).

## ORGANIC BEEKEEPING, WHICH CONTRIBUTES TO PROTECTING BEES

Is a pillar in the fight against genetically modified crops and an indisputable resource in conserving biodiversity and the environment. In addition, by-products derived from beekeeping have medicinal properties that contribute to naturally strengthening the immune system and can help to diminish the risk of contracting viral illnesses (3). Also, honey can be more effective in treating coughs and colds than over-the-counter medicines, according to a recent study by the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences at the University of Oxford (4). These characteristics of honey are even more important in the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is also important to note that Fairtrade beekeeping plays a key role in assisting communities in maintaining a connection to their land and promoting food sovereignty, since a dignified income from beekeeping activities can diminish rural migration.

## A MARKET WITH MANY CHALLENGES

International consumption of honey has continued to rise in recent years. However, adulterated (or falsified) honey introduced into the market at low prices has caused a drop in international prices for pure honey. In 2019 CLAC's Honey Network issued a positioning paper on honey adulteration, calling on consumers to purchase only pure honey (5).

(1) FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), "Beekeeping and sustainable livelihoods."

(2) INTA (Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria), "La polinización, una problemática con impacto sobre la productividad de los cultivos."

(3) "Los Productos Apícolas: Un complemento en la dieta para enfrentar mejor el COVID-19," Laboratorio de Estudios Apícolas, Departamento de Agronomía, Universidad Nacional del Sur, Bahía Blanca, May-June 2020.

(4) Abuelgasim, Hibatullah; Albury, Charlotte; and Lee, Joseph. "Effectiveness of honey for symptomatic relief in upper respiratory tract infections: a systematic review and meta-analysis." 2021, 10.1136/bmjebm-2020-111336. BMJ (Evidence-Based Medicine) <https://ebm.bmj.com/content/26/2/57.citation-tools>

(5) "Positioning on adulteration of honey," CLAC Honey Network, 2019. (<http://clac-comerciojusto.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/posicionamiento-sobre-miel-adulterada-Red-de-Miel-CLAC-2019.pdf>)



Unfair competition practices, such as honey adulteration, constitute a threat to sustainability for beekeepers and are deceptive to consumers. This is especially true in the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which consumers are trying to improve their eating habits and are aware that pure honey is a healthy food product.

It is also important to mention climate change, which is one of the most difficult challenges confronted in beekeeping operations, since it causes tangible negative impacts on production. Climate variability generates changes in beehive cycles, reduces flowering, affects the evolution of bee populations, reduces honey and pollen reserves, and generates stress in bees. In addition, it leads to serious instability in production and the deterioration of honey's commercial characteristics.

# POSITIONING

The Latin American and Caribbean Network of Fair Trade Small Producers and Workers (CLAC) recognizes the importance of preserving bees and expanding their populations in order to conserve ecosystems, and it supports Fairtrade and organic beekeepers. In order to "take care of bees," it is also necessary to promote good practices in sustainable honey production that is resilient to climate change.

CLAC is working together with local Fairtrade certified, through the Honey for the Future project (part of the development assistance program financed by Finland's government and the National Fairtrade Organization in Finland) to promote actions that will assist beekeepers in adapting to climate change and improving their productivity. Efforts include creating resilience through reforestation with native melliferous species, genetic improvement, renewal of queen bees, promotion, and distribution of educational and communication materials on climate change in local languages, and other practices aimed at maintaining beekeeping as a sustainable livelihood that is environmentally friendly and that helps to preserve biodiversity.

## THE SOUND AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES PROMOTED INCLUDE:

**Not using agrochemicals, reforesting large areas.**

**Conserving water, avoiding water contamination, and establishing beehives in strategic zones in native forests.**

**However, for beekeeping to remain sustainable, it is necessary for beekeepers to receive a fair price for their products. This allows them to cover their costs and obtain a profit that will guarantee dignified living for their families. Fairtrade and the sale of organic honey enable beekeepers to receive a living income that motivates them to continue to produce.**



# CARING FOR BEES REQUIRES THAT ALL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STAKEHOLDERS SUPPORT FAIRTRADE, ORGANIC, ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY BEEKEEPING.

**TO THIS END, CLAC:**

**Urges governments:** to promote policies and legislative initiatives on caring for bees and protecting biodiversity; to design and implement better policies in response to the economic and productive challenges faced by families of small beekeepers; to promote environmentally friendly agriculture and beekeeping with reduced use of genetically modified crops and agrochemicals; and to emphasize the importance of beekeeping in pollinating crops and preserving biodiversity.

**Urges civil society and consumers:** to purchase the products of Fairtrade beekeepers in order to support the preservation of bees; to promote the consumption of pure organic and Fairtrade honey produced by small beekeepers; and to increase the general population's awareness of the important role played by bees in maintaining biodiversity.

**Urges other stakeholders in the chain:** to collaborate with small beekeepers in mitigating the effects from climate change by promoting co-responsibility in adaptation; to promote the purchase of pure Fairtrade and organic honey; and to increase overall society's awareness of the negative effects from climate change on the livelihoods for beekeepers' families and on ecosystems.

**Urges the educational community:** to promote the consumption of pure honey in schools; to educate students on the role played by bees in biodiversity, and to teach children and adolescents to not be afraid of bees.

**Urges small beekeepers:** to improve their abilities in adapting to climate change from a focus on family agriculture; to produce organically; and to continue to bring visibility to measures they are taking to mitigate the effects of climate change. Also, to promote more synergy in working together to find solutions that will guarantee the sustainability of pure honey production.



"Bees are of vital importance for the lives of human beings and the environment, they pollinate more than 70% of food and collecting the nectar we can obtain the honey, food highly appreciated for health. The small Fairtrade beekeepers are committed to the environment, health and the production of 100% pure or organic honey, and organized we promote community well-being. Therefore, we encourage you to support sustainable beekeeping, buying pure, organic and Fairtrade honey".

**MIGUEL ANGEL MUNGUÍA, CLAC'S BOARD CHAIR.**



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