

Organic honey from Stara Planina mountain sites

Farmers producing organic honey in one of the natural reserves in Bulgaria have organized in a Organization of producers in 2013. This organization has a contract with one of the biggest producers, distributors and retailers of organic food in the country - Harmonica. The latter is a Bulgarian brand for organic products. In this contract Harmonica buys the processed honey from the organization of producers on premium prices and distributes it as a trade mark for organic honey with biodiversity features.



VALUE CHAIN



Farmer (beekeeper) – processor – distributor

PUBLIC GOODS



Farmland biodiversity



Quality and security of products



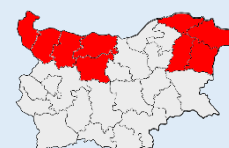
Farm animal health and welfare

INDIRECT EFFECTS

There are indirect effects on landscape and recreation activities.

LOCATION

BULGARIA



Northeast and Northwest part of the Stara Planina Mountain, covering the municipalities - Shoumen, Montana, Tyrgovishte, Vratsa.

Summary

The contract is ongoing since 2015 and includes on one hand collective contract between the farmers, and on the other - a contract with the distributor of the honey – “Harmonica” (it is also the name of the brand for natural, eco-friendly products). It also has the features of a value-chain contract, given that the honey and honey products go from the farmers to the processor (a small processing plant for organic honey) and distributor (“Harmonica”). The farmers within the organization are 30 at the moment and are situated in Southeastern and Northwest Bulgaria within the natural reserves of the Stara Planina Mountain. The honeybee products are distributed as high-quality, pesticide free and eco-friendly products with responsibility for the bees and the ecosystems. The contract terms doesn’t include specific amount of honey that should be delivered to Harmonica, but it is specified on a yearly basis. The payments are dependable on the type of honey and are between 6.50-11 euro per kilogram of processed honey.

Objectives

1. Conservation of biodiversity by producing honey in environmentally safe way in mountain sites
2. Popularization of Bulgarian honey and honey products with high quality and ecofriendly practices
3. Collective initiative for encouraging Bulgarian farmers to stay in business



Credits: Dragomir Nikolov, The Economist magazine

Problem description

The Bulgarian honey is mainly targeted for export for other countries. The honey however is classified as one with very high qualities, but unfortunately the mass consumption (due to lower prices) is of foreign imported honey and honey products. Also, in the last several years the share of poisoned bees due to agricultural activities is rising, putting some pressure on their population and therefore on the ecosystem functioning. The goal of this collective action was to encourage the consumption of premium natural honey which has positive impact on the local biodiversity, security and quality of products, keeping beehives far from industrialized areas and those with high pesticide risks.

CONTRACT

Private – private contract

Contract conclusion:

Written agreement



Payment mechanism:

Product price



Funding/Payments:

Each individual farmer sells his production to the Organization of producers of farmer. The payment from the distributor (Harmonica) is between 6.50-11 euro per kg of honey.

Length of participation in scheme:

Open end



Start of the program:

2015

End: ongoing

PRODUCT

- Organic honey from mountain areas
- No medicines or antibiotics are used for the treatment and prevention of bees.
- Only honey produced from the beehive is used to feed the bees.
- All the ingredients used for the production of the honey are natural without synthetic additives.

Data and Facts - Contract

Participation: 30 beekeepers participate in the contract solution.

Involved parties: The contracting parties are the Organization of the producers founded in 2013, the processor and the distributing company. The Organization consists at the moment of 30 farmers whose beehives are situated in the Stara Planina Mountain sites. Harmonica is a processing and distributing organization for eco-friendly products and the company is also involved in many environmental initiatives which main goal is to popularize and encourage environmental behavior both of producers and consumers.

The benefits for the organization of farmers – they have the opportunity to sell their production on premium prices for the Bulgarian market which is a way for them to secure part of their production. The price provided from the distributor is higher compared to the price for other producers of organic honey in the country.

The benefits for Harmonica – they can distribute honey products for the Bulgarian market within their brand for eco-friendly products as part of their mission to popularize quality organic products which have positive environmental impact.

Management requirements for farmers: The farmers should cover the main requirement for situating their beehives in natural reserves surrounded by natural forests and at least 3 kilometers away from contaminating sources. Synthetic drugs and sweeteners are not used when working with bee families. Both biological and homeopathic remedies are used to combat the diseases.

Controls/monitoring: The monitoring is done by independent certification organization for organic farming.

Conditions of participation: The main requirement is the beehives to be situated in natural reserves far away from contaminating sources (e.g. industrial enterprises, railway highways, congested roads) and agricultural lands which use pesticide and other harmful products. The monitoring is performed by independent certifying organization for organic farming (in this case organic beekeeping). The consequence for non-compliance is termination of the contract.

Risk/uncertainties of participants: The main risk that can be addressed to this contract is the risk of bee diseases and death of the bee family.

Links to other contractual relationships. The specific of the contract is mostly concerned with covering the requirements for organic practices. The farmers are applying for organic subsidies under the Rural Development Program for meeting organic standards

Framework conditions

Landscape and climate: The climatic conditions are with temperate-continental climate given that the beehives are situated mostly in Stara Planina sites. Forest ecosystems cover a large part of the territory (70,000 ha) and provide a variety of ecosystem services. This part of the mountain is known for its unique richness of flora and fauna and rich biodiversity, consisting of deciduous forests: oak, beech, maple, hawthorn, tar, linden, and also a variety of wild herbs which are the main food for the bee families.



Credits for photo: Tsvetelina Belutova

Farm structure: The farming system is organic production and the sector is beekeeping. The total number of beehives in the organization is around 4000, as the share of organic farms is 100%.

SUCCESS OR FAILURE?



This is the first farmer organization in Bulgaria for organic beekeeping which by negotiating and contracting with a distributor are placing their production on the Bulgarian market. In the long run they foresee to invest in their own collective processing plant and to distribute the honey products with their own environmental brand – organic honey from natural reserves.

Reasons for success:

1. A Bulgarian product with high quality from natural reserve can reach the Bulgarian market and consumers, whose demand for Bulgarian ecofriendly foods is rising in recent years.
2. This is the first collective effort among organic beekeepers in Bulgaria.
3. The practice for organic beekeeping secures animal welfare, as well as safety and quality of foods.

SWOT analysis

