

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Rostam Azizi, Nation
have the opportunity to ensure confidence and clarity."

EDITORIAL

Harness honey production to diversify economic returns

On Saturday, March 14, we ran an interesting story in regard to the growth of an industry that is often ignored – the production of honey (*Uganda produces 210,000 metric tonnes of honey - report*).

There are approximately 1.2 million bee keepers in Uganda, with 80,000 metric tonnes being exported every year. These figures, released by the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries, look glossy but cannot be ignored.

They clearly represent a goldmine away from the conventional sector we have been accustomed to under the aforementioned ministry. When you think of it, the majority of this country has known this sector as a preserve of farming, poultry and animal husbandry.

However, honey has now shown that it is as sweet as it tastes and could be a game changer for many bee keepers.

To start with, it is cheaper and requires a smaller amount of land in comparison to other projects many may want to undertake.

With the land tenure system in many parts of the country susceptible to land fragmentation, keeping bees would enable many communities to survive and thrive even more.

Like anything that requires expertise, it may as well be complicated but if you were to compare it to the other options, it might take a lot less knowledge and specialisation.

Science defines honey production as a natural process where honey bees collect, dehydrate, and store plant nectar in hives, reducing moisture from 80 percent to below 18 percent through enzyme action and fanning.

Foragers gather nectar, passing it to hive bees that process it, storing the final, thick

product in honeycomb cells, which are then capped with wax.

This has to be a programme that the government pays attention to in the many wealth creation initiatives being sold to the masses.

Bee keeping for profit is a highly viable, sustainable, and potentially lucrative business, with bee keepers often generating significant income from honey and related bee products.

The market isn't too distant as the primary customers for honey are likely to come from the local community, which negates the costs of distribution.

Selling directly to consumers removes the middleman, allowing for premium pricing of raw/local honey.

There is also an opportunity to diversify as you do not rely only on honey. You can use all products (wax, propolis, bees) to cushion against bad seasons.

The experts in the ministry have got to be deliberate and make honey production central to their extension services. There is a window of opportunity that we can unlock.

The Issue:

Bee keeping.

Our view:

Bee keeping for profit is a highly viable, sustainable, and potentially lucrative business that the government should invest in for better yields.

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