



Let's talk about...

SAFEGUARDING OUR BEES AND BEEKEEPING

According to the Beekeeping Association of Serbia, there are 20,000 beekeepers working in Serbia, with more than 1,200,000 bees. This is the largest number of beehives per capita (1 beehive per 6 inhabitants) in the world. According to the National Statistics Office data, there are 1,104,000 beehives in Serbia. In 2017, their number was increased by 7%, and beekeepers produced 7,014 tons of honey, with 22% growth compared to the previous year.

These data indicate a high export potential of honey in our country. What is even more important is the positive impact of bees on the environment. It is estimated that indirect benefit of bee pollen amounts to 150 million euros a year in Serbia.

WHY DIALOGUE?

Due to lack of awareness about the importance of keeping our bees safe, inadequate regulations or poor implementation, beekeeping in Serbia faces many challenges:

- Extensive increase in the use pesticides, particularly neonicotinoids, has a fatal effect on the bees. The use of pesticides at the time of blooming is unfortunately obstructing the life rhythm of bees. According to the Law on Plant Protection Products, any treatment of blooming plants is absolutely forbidden, but regulations are often breached. There is also a blooming grey market of pesticides, so wrong pesticides are often use at the wrong time, and in the wrong amounts.
- Due to a small number of inspectors, they often cannot react fast enough upon receiving reports on bee poisoning, allowing the pesticides to dissolve to an extent that their presence is hard to prove. Consequently, and due to inefficient practice of proving improper use of pesticides, mass bee poisoning most commonly goes entirely unpunished.
- Release of mosquito repellents from airplanes leads to mass bee poisoning. Even though the Institute of Biocides and Environmental Medicines announces air treatment 48 ahead, to enable moving of beehives to a safe location, this is hard to achieve in practice – the beekeepers need to obtain approval and permit for setting up beehives, and high temperatures often prevent them from moving the hives.

The role of bees in agriculture

For most of the foods we consume every day, we may thank the bees. These insects perform a vital task for agriculture – the pollination. In fact, as much as a third of the world's food supplies are produced thanks to bee pollination. Some examples of food we enjoy by merit of bees include: almonds, apples, apricots, avocado, blueberries, cashew nuts, coffee, cranberries, cucumber, eggplant, grapes, kiwi, mango, walnuts, peaches, pears, pepper, strawberries, tangerines and watermelon.



DIALOGUE GOALS

Due to the major significance of honey bees, public private dialogue aims to find solutions to protect bee communities from poisoning, thus safeguarding the entire segments of Serbia's ecosystem and agriculture, as well as the vital interests of around 20,000 beekeepers. Some of the possible solutions and potential discussion topics include:

- Better education of agriculture producers about the dangers caused by pesticides not complying with the regulations, for the bees, but the entire social community, including the farmers who use pesticides improperly.
- Capacity building of inspections (in terms of the number of inspectors and their training), and improving their technical equipment to determine unlawful use of pesticides and ensure court processing of such cases.
- Stricter sanctions for treating plots in a manner that is contrary to valid regulations and poisonous to the bees.
- Full harmonization with the EU regulations regarding the prohibition of releasing mosquito repellents from the air, and consistent implementation of these provisions.

Dialogue initiated by: Beekeeping Association of Serbia

The Beekeeping Association of Serbia (SPOS) is a voluntary, non-government and non-profit organization bringing together more than 9,000 beekeepers across Serbia. SPOS encourages bee producers to engage in alliances and further cooperate within the national union, with the aim of developing a favourable environment for breeding bees and trading in bee products. SPOS members initiate and actively engage in developing legal framework and programs for the development of beekeeping, bees' health, environment protection and improvement, along with organizing training programs for the producers. SPOS initiated the national beekeeping fair in 2009 and established the "Good beekeeping practice" standard, confirming the high quality of produced honey. The association also launched the facility "Our Honey" for the collection and trade of honey produced by SPOS members.

Dr Agostina Neta 30 A, 11070 Novi Beograd
011 61 28 071, spos.operativa@gmail.com
www.spos.info



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