Bee products: providing nutrition and generating income - Honeybees, beekeeping and bee products in our daily lives

Honey is a pretty amazing substance and there is a lot more to it than just a sweet tasting treat. Honey plays a crucial role in the life of a honey bee and can also be very beneficial to the human body.

Honey is a supersaturated sugar solution with approximately 17.1 percent water. Fructose is the predominant sugar at 38.5 percent, followed by glucose at 31 percent. Disac- charides, trisac -charides and oligosaccharides are present in much smaller quantities. Besides carbohydrates, honey contains small amounts of protein, enzymes, vitamins and minerals. Honey is known to be rich in both enzymatic and non-enzymatic antioxidants, including catalase, ascorbic acid, flavonoids and alkaloids. Although appearing only in trace amounts honey also contains about 18 different amino acids. Honey is much more than just a simple sugar. Rich in minerals and nutrients, honey also has some antibiotic properties that may aid in the healing process. For thousands of years honey has been used by mankind in many capacities to help give the human body energy and health.

Honey as the most widespread bee product is listed in medicine among the most valuable foodstuffs, especially because of its sugar content and other ingredients, such as enzymes, etheric oils and mineral salts. During convalescence after serious diseases and operations, doctors give their patients a 20-40% specially processed, sterilized honey dilution, which is showing great results.

In the Batchenga community, Centre region of Cameroon, there are about 28 farmers practice bee farming which is promoted by "Centre pour l'Environnement et le Développement" (CED) Cameroon. In this community, honey serves as a major source of income for the farmers and they confirm that bee farming provides them with about twice their initial yearly income as crop farmers.

However, bee farming is hindered because of the use of pesticides which greatly reduce the population of bees. A research, published in **Nature scientific report** (http://www.nature.com/articles/srep12574) on Thursday, combined large-scale pesticide usage and yield observations from oilseed rape with data on honeybee loses between 2000 and 2010.

Pic: Bee farming in Batchanga