

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION NO B/586

B/586 The Honourable First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien
(27.05.08) **(Mr Varma)**

To ask Dr the Honourable Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries:

Whether, in regard to the honey keepers, he will state the number thereof, indicating the facilities which are being currently extended to them by his Ministry?

REPLY

Mr Speaker Sir,

There are currently 240 beekeepers keeping some 2,000 bee colonies which produce, on average, 45 tons of honey annually representing 25 per cent of our honey requirements.

2. The Apiculture Unit of my Ministry and AREU are providing technical support and advisory services to the beekeepers as well as training in queen bee production and supply of queen bees. Beekeepers are also exempted from payment of custom duty on all equipment used exclusively for apiculture and loan facilities are available at the DBM for the purchase of such equipment. Additionally, the Ministry of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Co-operatives provides five bee hives with bee colonies estimated at Rs 20,000 to women co-operative societies. As at date, 20 societies have benefited from such facility.

3. Honey production is also being promoted among Agricultural Youth Clubs by AREU. In October 2005, the FAO provided US 5,880 under the Telefood Programme to Agricultural Clubs for the purchase of bee hives and equipment. Some 20 clubs involving 150 individuals participated in the programme which included training on bee keeping by AREU. By March 2006, there were 32 active bee hives under the programme and 95 kg of honey were harvested from 20 hives.

3. Apiculture is practised mainly as a part-time activity in Mauritius and the main apiary sites are found at Rivière Noire, Tamarin, Bras D'Eau, Poste La Fayette, Roche Noires and Nouvelle Decouverte where nectar sources from different natural and cultivated melliferous plants are available.

4. Bees are not useful only for honey production but they play an important role in pollination of several plants including vegetables and fruit trees. My Ministry is targeting a production of 60 tons of honey by 2015 and appropriate accompanying measures will be provided to beekeepers to achieve this target. These include:

- (a) Training of some 75 beekeepers each year in general apiculture and in queen bee production.
- (b) provision of some 2300 ha in potential apiary sites through afforestation and landscaping along road sides with melliferous plants and by renting state lands for placement of hives.
- (c) provision of nursery facilities for production of planting materials for melliferous plants by Forestry Department and the private sector; and
- (d) setting up of standards to regulate the quality of honey on the local market and also for export markets.

5. As for Rodrigues, this sector comprises 190 bee keepers keeping a total of 2300 colonies which produce some 25 tonnes of honey per year. Most of the honey produced is exported to Mauritius. Rodriguan honey is a world class product which has been recognised on several occasions. Rodrigues has the potential to increase the capacity as local bee keepers have acquired sufficient know how to produce honey and queen bees very well. Further more, the excellent climatic condition coupled with the pest and disease free environment confers much advantage to the sector.

6. Rodrigues is targeting a production of 75 tonnes and a maximum of 3000 hives by year 2015. Measures to boost up production will include:

- Assistance to beekeepers in the acquisition of basic hive tools and hive constructing materials.
- Continuous training to further empower beekeepers and also in other hives products having good export potentials.
- Increase in Queen bee production for sale to beekeepers so as to control inbreeding and prevent entrance of new pests and diseases. Additional beekeepers will be trained in queen rearing.
- Marketing of Rodriguan honey by the Rodrigues Trade and Marketing Company as a world class product and;
- Possibility of development of different taste of honey, example lemon and eucalyptus.