

Ukraine: a new beekeeper's destination

Ukraine is the top honey-producing country in Europe, but despite this fact, it still remains terra incognita for the beekeeping world. A thousand years ago, in the times of Kyivan Rus' – one of the most powerful states in medieval Europe – honey and wax were the main products of state export, being supplied to all the countries of the Old World and forming the basis of the domestic economy.

Eight hundred years later one Ukrainian beekeeper contributed greatly to the production of honey around the world. His name was Petro Prokopovych and he was a pioneer of practical and commercial beekeeping.

In 1814 Prokopovych's tireless search for a way to take out the honey without harming the bees resulted in the invention of the first in the world dismountable frame beehive, in which it was possible to control the bees and to actively influence the course of the development. Prokopovych was the first to consider a frame as a module of a beehive. Today it is used by millions of beekeepers all over the world. It was a landmark in the history of beekeeping and it began the era of rational beekeeping.

Another one of Prokopovych's inventions was the wooden partition with apertures that are passable only by working bees. It made it possible to get pure honey from the frames.

As for Ukrainian beekeeping today, the industry in Ukraine is developing actively. Demand for Ukrainian honey is increasing in both the foreign and the domestic markets. Annually Ukrainians increase their consumption of honey by 10-15%.

In Ukraine there are over 400,000 beekeepers, a considerable part of them being farmers, private land owners, and small beekeeping enterprises. According to latest statistics, 1.5% of the Ukrainian population is engaged in producing honey. Ukraine is also ranked as the number one country in Europe in terms of gross honey output, producing 75,000 metric tons annually, and is among the top 5 countries in the world. According to beekeeping statistics, over the course of the last few years the number of honeybee colonies in Ukraine has increased to 5 million.

In Ukraine industrial and amateur methods are used in the field of beekeeping, including well-developed sectors of honeybee queen breeding, recently acquired package apiculture, and quite widely used modern commercial honey farming techniques.

Favorable climatic conditions and a variety of natural zones predetermine the high-quality assortment of honey. The most important and popular honeys in Ukraine are sainfoin honey, sweet clover honey, buckwheat honey, echium vulgare honey, linden honey, thistle honey, sunflower honey, and monofloral honey. But the best-known and most widespread honey is from the acacia blossom. In the different regions of Ukraine, preferences of honey

consumption are very different. The western part of Ukraine consumes like buckwheat honey more. In eastern areas, consumers prefer the acacia and linden-tree honey. In the south, the main honey flower is the sunflower, in central Ukraine it is buckwheat and sunflower, and in the northern part of the country the red clover and forest herbs. In the mountainous regions forest herbs and winter-annual rapeseed are the most common.

Eighty-three percent of the export of beekeeping products to the European market is to such countries as Germany, Poland, France, Slovakia, Spain, Hungary, Austria, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Switzerland, Italy, and Denmark. Another market for honey products is located in the post-Soviet space, namely Russia, Belarus, Azerbaijan, and Moldova. In addition, a significant proportion of honey is exported to the United States, Panama, and Canada. In the next few years, the export of honey is expected to grow from 30 to 40% per year, primarily due to the potential of the European markets, where Ukraine has access with entry to the free trade area. In the near future the XXXXIII Apimondia International Apicultural Congress will help to increase Ukrainian honey exports.

The year 2013 promises to be the year of the biggest global event in beekeeping in Ukraine. Apimondia Congress will take place from September 29 to October 4 in Kyiv, the country's capital.

The XXXXIII International Apicultural Congress of 2013 is anticipated to be the greatest event in the history of the beekeeping industry. Due to the

affordable participation rates and host's country's special location in the heart of dense apicultural region of Eastern Europe, up to 10,000 participants from over 100 countries are expected to attend. It will gather both amateur and professional beekeepers, leading experts of the beekeeping sector and specialists in related areas, scientists, and representatives of the commercial sector, non-profit organizations, and the government — that is, anyone who is interested in exploring the topic of beekeeping and willing to share his or her experience.

Such an event as the XXXXIII Apimondia International Apicultural Congress will not only have a great influence on the development of the beekeeping industry in Ukraine but also will provide an opportunity for the whole beekeeping world to discover this unique Honeyland in the heart of Europe.