

## Explore the world of beekeeping <Part 3>

### Apiculture in Mozambique and its challenges

The author was a member of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) in the southeastern part of Mozambique from June 2012 to February 2015. At that time, I had an opportunity to receive guidance from a Japanese-Brazilian apiculture expert and extend the learned technique to the local farmers. In this article, we would like to describe the current situation and the issues facing apiculture in Mozambique.

The land faces the Indian Ocean and is not only blessed with marine resources, it is also a country where palms and mangoes grow, and citrus fruits such as oranges can be harvested in the south. With such an environment as a nectar source, traditional honey collection is performed in many places. As seen in some African countries, beehives with hollowed out trunks covered with bark are found from the central to the northern part of Mozambique. Palm trunks are the main materials used for this. In addition, there are some farming families performing apiculture using large pots normally used for storing water. The traditional beehive made from the bark of the “Tambeira” tree, cut into strips 150 cm long and 50 cm wide, is common in the Inhambane province in the Southern part of the country. The bark strips are bent to form cylindrical stakes and the fragrance of this bark is said to attract bees. Many traditional apiculture methods rely on installing beehives on top of trees and waiting for bees to naturally arrive. But it is interesting to note that this Tambeira beehive is placed on the ground covered by tree bushes so that it will not get wet easily. Farmers said that this method has been used for a long time because there are few large mammals inhabiting this environment and there is no fear of hives being destroyed, and also because the method is simpler and safer. For both beehives, smoke is used when collecting honey, which may cause a fire, and it is unlikely that bees will enter and settle, and the overall yield is around one-tenth of that of modern beekeeping boxes.



Tambeira beehive

In this way, the form of the beehive varies from region to region, but information and experiences are not exchanged between farmers. Although the importance of

apiculture is recognized at the district level, it is not shared enough to cross between agriculture department of each province. On the other hand, various beehives are currently being donated by different donors. In addition to the modern beekeeping box, the beehives called bar type and Kenyan type are often found in the southern part of the country. It is possible to get a yield close to that of a modern beekeeping box depending on management, but there are many farmer groups that simply leave the box and wait for bees to enter in the same way as in a traditional beehive without applying any technologies. In order to improve this situation, some members of JOCV working on apiculture and community development extended knowledge of honey bee habits and techniques such as the capture methods of a queen bee and shifting of bees from traditional beehives to these new beehives is being performed.



Kenyan type beehive

Among Mozambicans, as in Japan, honey is said to be good against colds and sore throats, but despite its popular demand the manufacture of honey is still largely undeveloped commercially. Individual farmers or groups may sell it in whiskey bottles in local markets or along the national highways to generate a small cash income but there is no such thing as setting up a shop for retail. In that case, it may only fetch around half of the price it would if sold in the capital. Another problem is that many farmers accept modern beekeeping boxes and the Kenyan type beehives which are distributed by donors such as aid agencies but install them without applying the necessary techniques to maintain them. Recently some farmers groups have begun to hold study sessions and have started to make the beekeeping boxes and smoke devices necessary for management and honey collection. If such conscious farmers can take the next step and acquire the knowledge and techniques to increase the colony from the modern beekeeping boxes, instead of moving the colony from the traditional beekeeping boxes, apiculture will grow as one of the fields of livelihood improvement including forest management.