

Introducing Mozambican Honey at Bee Summit 2023

In November 2023, the Bee Summit was held at the Tsukuba International Congress Center in Ibaraki Prefecture. The event brought together researchers, beekeepers, and businesses in apiculture, providing a platform for information exchange and collaboration. It was one of the first large-scale, in-person gatherings of its kind since the COVID-19 pandemic.

A highlight of this year's summit was the introduction of honey from Mozambique. Led by a former Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer who had promoted beekeeping in Mozambique, the project aimed to assess the honey's potential in the Japanese market. I supported the initiative, drawing on my own volunteer experience in beekeeping development in Mozambique.

Beekeeping promotion in Inhambane Province, Mozambique, began in 2012 through the JICA volunteer program. Although traditional honey harvesting had been practiced for generations and the region is rich in nectar sources, yields remained low. Volunteers introduced modern techniques—including improved hives—to help farmers increase productivity and improve their livelihoods.

Over the years, many volunteers contributed to this effort. In some cases, their work resulted in higher yields and new market access. One notable success involved connecting honey producers with an off-season coconut oil factory to bottle and distribute the honey—a major breakthrough for farmers who previously lacked formal sales channels.

Despite these achievements, domestic demand for high-quality honey in Mozambique remains limited, and securing fair prices is still difficult. To address this, the team turned to the Japanese market, using the Bee Summit to showcase the product and gather feedback from industry professionals.

Two varieties of Mozambican multi-floral honey were featured. Though both were made from diverse local blossoms, they differed in flavor and appearance

depending on their region of origin. One, produced through a volunteer-facilitated company, had a dark color and rich, brown sugar-like taste. The other, made by JICA-trained farmers, had a reddish-amber hue and a savory, miso-like note.

These distinctive characteristics drew attention from Japanese visitors, and the honey's Mozambican origin sparked additional interest. Many attendees described the taste as “unusual but intriguing,” with some suggesting it would suit savory dishes, such as Chinese cuisine, more than traditional uses like yogurt or tea.

Over the summit's three days, all 90 bottles (about 120g each, totaling 10 kilograms) sold out. Feedback from consumers and industry professionals was overwhelmingly

positive, offering valuable insight into the honey's potential in the Japanese market.

Looking ahead, sustained success will require more than early enthusiasm. Stable production, consistent quality, reliable filtration, and suitable pricing strategies will be key to long-term viability.

While challenges remain, we are committed to supporting ongoing efforts to bring Mozambican honey—produced through the dedication of local farmers and JICA volunteers—to broader markets in Japan and beyond.

(February 2024, Ioki)



Miso-flavored honey (left) and honey with a brown sugar-like taste (right)