

# **Rural Beekeeper: a conservator of honeybees and their diversity**

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Globally Sri Lanka is considered a “biodiversity hot spot” where major honeybee species (three *Apis* and one *Trigona*) are common. In this island good environments and compatible technologies are available for apiary honey production; even though it had not been able to explore the full potential of these favourable factors, especially the enhanced utilization of *Apis cerana*. A majority of honey harvesters still use rather old-fashioned techniques in obtaining honey. Though the production levels may be low compared to what could be achieved by using “movable comb technology” rural beekeepers are successful in producing modest yields, but more importantly conserving and utilizing a gene-pool which will eventually form the backbone of the honey production industry.

Globally, the major honey producer *Apis mellifera* is not in Sri Lanka and as such the honeys are truly pure without the contamination of chemicals needs to maintain

When honey is obtained as a forest product or a home garden product there seem a large damage to the bee life itself and to the environment. Lack of proper nesting sites for swarms also seems another limitation. Therefore, a new hive design is introduced as an intermediate step before the adoption of complete “movable comb technology”, where the two nest areas, such as the brood nest and honey nest could be separated with ease. This forms the basis of the intermediate hive type and new approach to honey harvesting without damage to brood nest. This will ensure the bees will not abscond after honey harvesting and the colony remain at the original site. Selection and not having lines that are consistent in good productivity is one of our major constraints to a successful breeding program. The new hive design is quite compatible with the traditional approach of rural beekeepers and can effectively screen and retain colonies for future use. This we see as a major advantage in this new approach. Retaining bees through out the year and harvesting had not been the possible in former days.