

## Honey production – a growing enterprise of Karak

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Karak is an arid region of Southern NWFP and is famous for its *Zizyphus* trees (*Ber*), which is a unique feature of dry lands in Pakistan. People of the area are generally poor and are involved in different income generating activities. Farm Forestry Support Project (FFSP) took the initiative to support community based initiatives and interventions on non-subsidized basis which sometimes poses a challenge in an area heavily loaded with subsidized packages provided by various development agencies.

Honey production is widespread in Karak. The most important indigenous flora for honey production includes *Ber* and *Phulai* (*Acacia*). *Ber* honey is very popular. Due to the fine quality of honey, it is exported to markets at provincial and national level. Most of the honey entrepreneurs producing *Ber* honey were outsiders. Looking into the potential of the Karak area, FFSP and partner organizations motivated local communities for production of *Ber* honey. It was identified under the Non Timber Forest Produce, which has high income potential for the poor and landless. The local people started taking interest in the enterprise due to its high profitability potential and increasing demand. Hafiz Masood of village



Takht-e-Nasrati was one of them. He was interested in taking up honey production as a business with the support of the local partner NGO 'YARAAN' (the friends). Hafiz Masood is



a small farmer, with a little piece of land. He had prior knowledge of honey production and trade at local level.

Hafiz Masood received training from Pakistan Forest Institute in Peshawar on honey production and processing. After the training, he purchased five wooden boxes for rearing bees to begin with the business. Building upon his experience and technical knowledge, Hafiz applied various marketing techniques to attract the buyers. He introduced small and neat packing material with minimum price, so that it remains cost effective and economical for the consumers too. He used his own innovative skills and ways for making a colorful and attractive label for his products.

Local *mela* (farmers' fare) is a tradition in Karak district, which is a unique phenomenon in this part of the Province and a good opportunity for local buyers and sellers. Hafiz Masood used these events effectively for marketing well-packed and presentable honey. Similarly, he introduced unique and quality honey of his area in other festivals and exhibitions (including the *mela* organized by IC Pakistan in Peshawar), which further encouraged him to market local

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honey in larger markets.

Initially he started with 5 boxes of beehives and sold honey worth Rs.25000 a year. This motivated him to increase the number of bee hives. In the following season, he doubled the boxes to 10 so he could further access larger markets with full confidence. He is expecting to double his income from Rs.25,000 to Rs.50,000 in the year 2006 and later maybe even more due to the high quality of the product.



Hafiz Masood shares his experience and knowledge with other fellow entrepreneurs. He serves as a master trainer in the area to encourage other local bee keepers and train them in the production and processing of high quality honey, as he knows that the demand for this product is very high. FFSP and its partner organizations are facilitating him in promotion of his services among communities and organizations.



In Haripur Bibi Sabz Jan began to earn income from honey in the year 2004. She earned Rs.3000 in the first year from two boxes. In 2005 she increased her number of boxes to five and made Rs.6000/-. Later, she extended them to twenty and projects an income of more than Rs.14000/- Her family owns a rainfed piece of land measuring almost 2 acres on which they can hardly subsist. Her husband also earns a pension of nearly Rs.2000 per month. In this scenario, she hopes and anticipates that her income from honey will be a significant (33-50%) contribution in her family income. She looks forward to receive advice on producing better quality honey and it's packaging to enhance her profit margin.

