

Honey sales surpass domestic production

POST REPORT

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Changing health trends have pushed up sales of honey in the country's urban areas and producers are scrambling to fulfil orders. Honey entrepreneurs said that due to lack of commercial farming and policy to boost output, production has not been able to keep pace with soaring demand.

Nepal currently produces 2,000 tonnes of honey against the potential to harvest at least 35,000 tonnes annually.

Nepal Trade Integration Strategy 2010 has also listed honey among the 19 major exportable items, but the policy to encourage producers has not been so effective, participants said at an interaction organized by the South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (Sawtee) here on Tuesday. "Although bee-keeping is gaining popularity and more and more farmers are taking it up, Nepali honey has not been able to meet the demand of the domestic market," said Dharma Raj Shrestha, president of the Central Honey Entrepreneurs Association of Nepal.

"Nepal has been importing honey from India and other coun-



tries to fulfil the domestic requirement," he said, adding that the government should introduce a policy focused on commercializing the sector.

Nepali honey accounts for 50 percent of the total consumption in the country. Many traders have started branding and packaging their products. Nepal Honey, Himalayan Honey, Gandaki Honey, Gorkha Honey, Namaste Honey, Shakti and Himali Honey are some of the brands in Nepal that have been competing with Indian

brands like Dabur and Patanjali Honey.

The association said that the country produces around 2,000 tonnes of honey annually. According to the figures of the Trade and Export Promotion Centre, 2,400 tonnes of honey was imported in the last fiscal year, up from 2,000 tonnes in the previous fiscal. Traders said that high quality honey was being exported.

More than 50,000 farmers are directly and indirectly involved in honey production, while there are

more than 100 cooperatives maintaining 25-300 beehives each. A single beehive yields around 35 kg of honey annually.

"As beekeeping is largely affected by climatic conditions, due to lack of training and knowledge on improved beekeeping practices, farmers have been unable to expand their farms," said Hem Raj Devkota, general secretary of the Federation of Nepal Bee Keepers. He said that banks and financial institutions were also reluctant to issue loans to beekeepers.

There are at least five different honeybee species, *Apis mellifera*, *Apis cerana*, *Apis dorsata*, *Apis laboriosa* and *Apis flora*, in the country. Various participants at Tuesday's interaction stressed the need for commercial farming, grading system and effective branding. They also said that it was necessary to encourage cooperative practices to boost production.

"Despite the huge potential in the domestic and international markets, we have not been able to tap it. The government should come up with an effective honey policy to address various issues in honey production and supply," said Posh Raj Pandey, executive chairman of Sawtee.