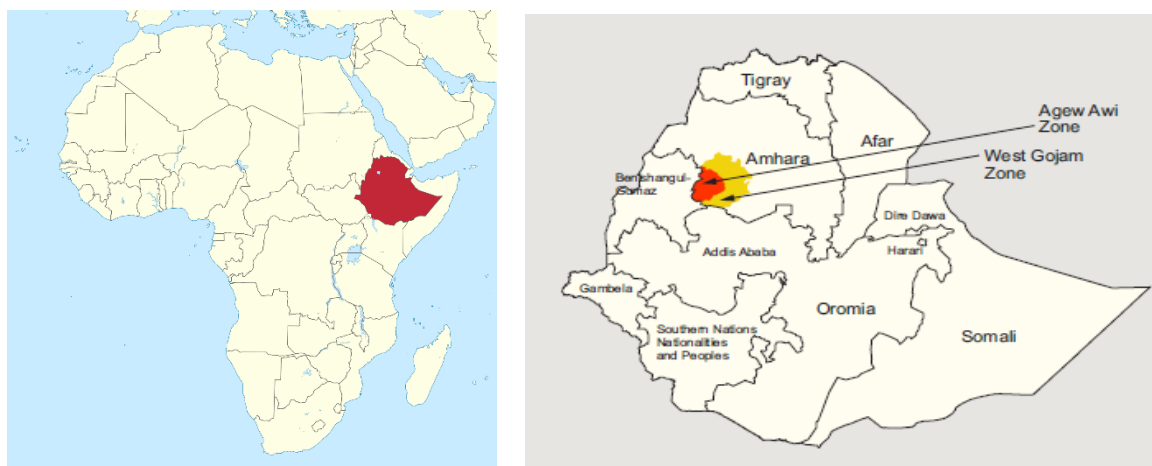


Learner worksheet 1A

Honey Production in Ethiopia



Maps showing: a, the location of Ethiopia in Africa and b, the honey producing regions included in the research project.

Honey Production

Over the past decade, Ethiopia has become one of the fastest growing economies in Africa, and it is farming which is leading this growth. Beekeeping is an important source of jobs, employing up to two million people. In 2012 Ethiopia was the largest producer of honey in Africa. Globally, there is large and growing demand for honey, as well as for beeswax and other bee products.

In Ethiopia, beekeeping and honey production are traditionally jobs that have been carried out by men, partly because harvesting honey from traditional hives requires climbing trees where the hives are kept, which is not socially acceptable for women. Women's ability to produce and sell honey has also been made more difficult by few women being owners of land and equipment, and by women's limited access to money and training. Over the last decade, however, more women in the Amhara region of Ethiopia have been joining collective action groups. Women have benefitted from these groups not only because they can meet and work together to produce more and better-quality honey but also because of an increased global demand for honey and bee products. These groups have also been able to use modern hives that are relatively cheap. Modern hives are boxes that can be kept on the ground so there is no need for women to climb trees.

Women in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, women play an active role in family-based farming, where families manage a small farm to produce what they need to eat and maybe some more crops to sell at market. According to the World Bank, 21% of all households in Ethiopia are 'run' by women, (where it is a woman who controls most of the money and decisions).

In rural villages, there is often no electricity or piped water. It is often women's responsibility to carry water from wells, gather fuel wood and grind grain by hand. These difficult tasks plus responsibilities for children can leave women with little time or opportunity to make money. However, honey is a product that requires less labour time and land compared to growing vegetables or raising chickens, for example. Therefore women with little time and little access to

land may still produce honey. Modern hives and other changes in honey production have meant that many more women in Amhara are able to make money from the honey business. Those involved in collective action groups also experience benefits such as better access to tools and loans of money, and more people to sell their product to and for a higher price.

Case study of Shashie



Shashie, in her late thirties, is married and has two daughters. Her husband is a soldier and does not live with her most of the time. She studied up to Year 11 but then left school to get married. Shashie is solely responsible for her family as her husband does not send any money home. In 2008 Shashie was encouraged by a local charity, SOS-Sahel, to start beekeeping and was given a modern hive but for some time she was still dependent on the support of the charity as she did

not have enough skills and knowledge to deal with the bees.

Shashie with her hives. These modern hives have enabled more women to become involved in honey production. Collecting honey from traditional hives requires climbing trees, which is not socially acceptable for women. Modern hives can be kept on the ground, near the household, and are relatively cheap. They also produce more, and better quality honey than traditional hives.

Oxfam selected her for training and Shashie selected 19 women from her village and organized them into a collective action group to help its members get better at producing honey. The women appointed Shashie to serve as their leader for six months.

In addition to the training, Shashie received another modern hive and some money to buy bee colonies from Oxfam. Shashie increased her skills and confidence, and used her first earnings to buy three more hives. These days, Shashie does not need anyone's support with her beekeeping activities and she can decide how to spend her money.



Meanwhile, Shashie and all of her collective action group members joined a cooperative, to help market their honey (find more people to sell it to and for a higher price). She was soon elected into a senior position in the cooperative. It was unusual for a woman to hold this kind of position. However, Shashie performed far better than many of the men in the group! She was seen as being a committed and hard worker, having good ideas, making decisions, producing reports and presenting the reports to the general assembly of the cooperative.

Shashie has now mastered the activities of beekeeping and is making a good income from it. She can now afford to send her children to school. Furthermore, Shashie is confident enough to lead meetings with as many as 500 people and has more connections with the wider world, making her less vulnerable to unexpected set-backs such as not being able to find a buyer for her honey.