

First Euro- Mediterranean Beekeeping Dialogue Forum

Brussels, European Parliament, June 27th, 2017

PREAMBLE

On the 27th of June 2017, the first Euro Mediterranean Dialogue Forum between Mediterranean Beekeeping and European Beekeeping, promoted by APIMED, FELCOS Umbria and UNDP, was held in Brussels, hosted by MEP Mariya Gabriel Chair of the “Apiculture & Bee Health” working group of the EP Intergroup “*Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development*” and MEPs Michel Dantin, Mairead McGuinness, Marijana Petir, Nathalie Griesbeck, Frédérique Ries, John Procter under the European Week of Bees and Pollination 2017.

The event organized at the European Parliament was attended by numerous delegations of APIMED – Mediterranean Beekeepers Federation - coming from countries on the North, the South and Middle East shores of the Mediterranean Basin and delegations from continental Europe or shore-Countries not members of APIMED.

The topic of the Forum was the first structured comparison between the representations of the productive realities of both geo-climatic and political areas on the main opportunities and the pressing challenges of the future with which beekeeping is also being called upon to deal:

- Contrast to environmental degradation;
- Protecting the diversity of animal and plant species;
- Actions for sustainable and environmentally sustainable development;
- Contrast to social degradation and poverty;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THAT:

Bees are guardians of environmental defense and guarantor of the liveableness of a territory; at the same time bees are both a symbol and agent of biodiversity through their irreplaceable pollinating action;

Beekeeping express a very high environmental, economic and cultural value; it is a traditional production activity actually innovative, today, in the practice and meaning. It can contribute to the international challenges fighting against poverty and achieving the *Sustainable Development Goals of UN Agenda 2030*, in particular with regard to the protection of biodiversity, responsible consumption and production, social emancipation of people and the fight against poverty.

Bees are subjected to different phenomena - as climate changes, desertification, deforestation, use of agronomic methods and harmful agro-pesticides, specific diseases - which threaten their survival.

In order to protect beekeeping, the following issues have a strategic importance: the relationship between territories, the alliances among beekeepers, farmers, researchers, civil society and international cooperation, local and national governments, all the stakeholders that are interested in the active defense of biodiversity and sustainable human development through the conservation and development of productive activities such as beekeeping. For these reasons, the support from the United Nations and the European Union is essential and strategic.

The attendees in the first edition of the Euro Mediterranean Forum unanimously recommend that:

The European Union and other international bodies take the commitment to:

- Continue the work towards the realization of free trade agreements as foreseen in the White Paper of Barcelona, in particular through the elimination of non-tariff barriers;
- Agree on shared quality standards for the circulation and marketing of honey and other beekeeping products in the Euro-Mediterranean area;
- Include direct support measures for beekeepers and bees as biodiversity agents in the European Union Rural Development Programmes and in the National Agricultural / Rural Development Plans of the Mediterranean Countries;
- Encourage the development of a Mediterranean network and a partnership that integrates and improves the existing ones among Mediterranean beekeepers and European beekeepers.
- Strengthen the international cooperation and dialogue between Europe and the Mediterranean countries as a tool for improving socio-economic cohesion in the region and building a shared area of well-being and peace;

The local and national governments take the commitment to:

- Reduce or eliminate the causes that threaten the survival of bees, such as climate change, desertification, deforestation, and crop and agricultural practices that are harmful to bees and all the other pollinators;
- Implement policies that favor the use of honeybees in areas that are subject to environmental degradation, impoverishment of biodiversity and desertification;
- Make the agro-pharmaceutical industries adopt appropriate procedures for validating their products before placing them on the market with updated protocols considering the latest research about the effects of these substances on bees;
- Safeguard and enhance the *sub-species* of autochthonous honey bees, also in order to preserve and enhance the territoriality and specificity of local beekeeping activity;

- Support small-beekeepers in small-scale projects with appropriate support measures; Implement farm-credit programs for beekeepers;
- Strengthen forms of aggregation, exchange and cooperation between beekeepers and their organizations at local, national and international level;
- Facilitate the inclusion and participation of women in beekeeping;
- Support national monitoring networks and use specific IT tools to know and monitor the health of bee and Euro-Mediterranean beekeeping;
- Strengthen information campaigns and raise awareness among public opinion, institutions, schools and farmers on the importance of bees and beekeeping the environment and biodiversity;

The farmers take the commitment to:

- Increase crop and environmental biodiversity in their farms;
- Practice sustainable and low environmental impact forms of agriculture, reducing towards elimination the use of pesticides harmful for bees;

The agro-pharmaceutical industries take the commitment to:

- Assist farmers in the post-sales phase of pesticides and in making them responsible, together with the phytosanitary authorities, in the adoption of good practices in the use of plant protection products.

Taking into account the common challenges and development opportunities that emerged during the Dialogue Forum, the beekeepers represented by the Copa Cogeca Honey Working Group and the beekeepers represented by the Mediterranean Beekeepers Federation are committed to collaborate in order to:

- *Promote market transparency and contrast the circulation of bad or false honey;*
- *Enlarge the partnership agreements between the Countries of the European Union and the Countries of the Mediterranean area;*
- *Continue the debate on issues related to honey quality and recognition of the methods of analysis, investigation and identification of honey in the markets;*
- *Establish an institutionalized and permanent debate table, which could be, on the example of the Mediterranean Beekeeping Forum, a Euro-Mediterranean Beekeepers Forum;*
- *Adopt sector-tools and, where they exist, improve and establish networks among them; for this purpose, reinforce the monitoring activities in the territories with regard to the modalities*

and quality of information exchange between beekeepers (bee health, environmental pollution, pesticides, market problems, environmental impact).

Taking into account the fundamental role of honeybees for biodiversity and life conservation, all the involved actors take the commitment to:

Ensure that beekeeping is recognized as a “Global Common Good”.