

REGIONAL TRAINING SEMINAR ON DISEASES OF HONEY BEES

June 14 - 17, 2011, Ezulwini, Swaziland

Opening Remarks by

Dr Bonaventure Mtei,
OIE Sub Regional Representative for Southern Africa.

Honourable Minister, Mr Dlamini,

Permanent Secretary Dr Robert Thwala,

President of the OIE Africa Commission, Dr Saley Mahamadou

OIE Regional Representative Dr Yacouba Samaké

Invited Speakers – All protocol observed

Dear Participants

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to join the OIE Delegate for Swaziland, Dr Roland Dlamini in welcoming you to Swaziland and I believe you all travelled well. I would also like through you Hon Minister, on behalf of the Director General of the OIE, Dr Bernard Vallat, to sincerely thank the Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland for agreeing to host this meeting and to you in particular for availing yourself to come and grace this occasion.

I thank everybody here present for finding the time amidst your busy schedule to come to this seminar which I reckon is another milestone as far as OIE activities are concerned in Southern Africa. Today there is mounting pressure to improve delivery of animal health and welfare services as a prerequisite to enter the competitive arena of trade in animals and animal products which includes ***non traditional aspects like honey bees and their products***, the subject of this seminar.

Requirements in terms of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures and guidelines of international standard-setting organisations (ISSOs), OIE, IPPC and Codex have a direct linkage with the eventual acceptance and or refusal of bees and bee products by importing countries. On the one hand, there is a threat of importing countries requiring standards that are unattainable and on the other, the need for supporting exporting countries to comply with trade protocols.

Constraints facing animal health services are well known and adequately identified through the Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) Pathway embraced by all the SADC Member States. The Director General of the OIE, Dr Bernard Vallat once commented and I quote.....” ***Animals (including honey bees) are everywhere in Africa but health services are nowhere...***” end of quote. Animal health impacts significantly on wealth creation and food safety and honey bee health is no exception, hence the rationale and objectives of this seminar.

Hon Minister,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Collecting honey from wild bee colonies is one of the oldest human activities and is still being practiced by communities in many parts of Africa and other regions of the world. Traditional harvesting of bee products involves destruction of the bee colony along with its precious queen which means loss of valuable resources since there is no continuity of production.

With the evolution of hive designs there has been an explosion of innovations which have perfected the design and production of beehives, systems of bee management and husbandry, stock improvement by selective breeding, honey extraction and marketing to mention a few, and this has changed the whole landscape of Apiology and Apiculture.

There is ample evidence to show that the irresponsible use of pesticides negatively impact on beekeeping and disorders like Colony Collapse can be addressed more effectively by reversing multifactorial trends that disrespect good management of bees including honey bee diseases.

This seminar is meant to address honey bee health issues which are increasingly becoming a concern in the Southern Africa region following reports of *American Foul-Brood* (AFB) in South Africa in the Western Cape Province and Varroosis in Madagascar in April 2009 and February 2010 respectively. We are fortunate to have world class experts on honey bee diseases with us today to share their knowledge on the subject.

Hon Minister,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Given the importance of beeping in the region, OIE saw it befitting to organise this capacity building seminar on the different aspects of the beekeeping sector in particular raising awareness on honey bee's health to ensure timely and accurate notification of exceptional epidemiological events in line with OIE's mandate.

Bee health disorders impact not only on household income and agricultural production, but also can be trade sensitive. Given the importance of Apiculture and the way bee products are harvested and marketed, and given the lack of notification of bee-diseases in general, the national OIE focal points on sanitary information management and National Apiculture Officers from all SADC Member States have gathered here to share experiences and develop common understanding on how to address current and future challenges in the Apiculture industry. We must be more vigilant on investigating causes of mortalities of bees to better prevent and control diseases of honey bees.

As OIE we would like to see closer networking between animal health experts, biologists and entomologists ... a good way of putting the “**One Health**” concept into actual practise. OIE greatly values non traditional partners like bee experts and others whose knowledge and skills contributes to the development of standards published in the OIE Codes and Manuals to safeguard better and safer trade in animals and commodities thereof.

This meeting has been organised with financial support from the European Union under the Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) in Africa programme for which we greatly appreciate. We hope each one of us will have something new to learn from this seminar and your short visit to Swaziland will be memorable.

I thank you.