

Relief Society of Tigray (REST) is a fast mover organization in apiculture development in Tigray. Currently, REST launched new beekeeping project.

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Tigray region is one of the potential and well known honey producing regions in Ethiopia. It is known for its good quality white honey. Farmers in the region have long experience of traditional beekeeping. The efforts made to improve this sub-sector from traditional practice to improved technologies is being challenged by shortage of beekeeping input materials, drought, lack of management skill and associated effects of pest (Chala et al 2012; Gangwar et al 2010; Gizachew et al 2013; Workneh and Ranjitha 2011).

To solve the challenges and boost the opportunities regarding the apiary development, many governmental and non-governmental organizations are working abundantly. In Tigray, Relief Society of Tigray (REST) is breakthrough organization to modernize the apiary development. Currently, apiary is becoming as main economic alternative to change the life styles of the people. Many landless youth, land holder farmers, cooperatives are engaged on the bee keeping activities. As it is mentioned, REST in partnership with the government and donor works effectively to support the beneficiaries. Many modern hives, bee colonies, materials are given to the beekeepers so far. In addition to that, beneficiaries are trained with the unwavering efforts of REST. By now REST is known widely for its apiary development. Many people consider REST as hub of experience and center excellency in apiculture development and other developmental activities.



This picture is taken from Ganta Afeshum woreda, Tabiaya wuhdet (REST site)

In Tigray, the numbers of young people and women is increasing but have no access to farm land. The land is degraded as a result of deforestation and erosion. The farm size is highly fragmented. There are also limited options for diversifying income. Livestock and honey are important source of income for middle and well off families but the poor and vulnerable families benefit less due to lack of land, access to finance and skills. Distressing migration has increasingly become an issue of cross cutting for the government as well as development partners like EU. Vulnerability to environmental factors and lack of economic opportunities are strong forces driving irregular migration mainly among adult youth seeking better opportunities.

There fore, currently, In addition to the existed apiary development, REST in collaboration with Eu/oxfam GB launched new apiary project. The project is named **Beekeepers Economic Empowerment through long-Term Investments in Entrepreneurship and Value chain in Ethiopia (BEE-LIEVE Project)**. The BEE-LIEVE Project will focus on supporting smallholder beekeepers (particularly landless and unemployed women and youth) to boost honey production and productivity using modern technology and to expand their market base. The action will capacitate honey producers on production, collection, storage, processing and packaging aspects as well as business and entrepreneurship skills so as to grow as enterprise owners and increase their income.

The main objective of the launched project is to contribute more in reducing poverty among poor and vulnerable people in in Tigray as well as in Ethiopia through an inclusive and sustainable honey value chain development.

Mainly the newly launched project will cover the selected woredas of Eastern Zone; Kilita Awlalo, Atsbi-wemberta, Gulo mekeda and Ganta Afeshum and Southern Zone; Enda mekoni and Ofla wereda with the expectation to reach about 12,000 and 180,000 direct and indirect beneficiaries respectively.

As the approach implementation of the project indicated, actions are developed through close consultation and a series of meetings and workshops conducted with multi-stakeholders of regional and woreda based government institutions including Research Centers, Universities, TAMPA, NGO's, community leaders, Agencies, Financial Institutions, extra, all planned activities signed under agreements are expected to be delivered and successfully implemented having creating strong relations and coordination as well as active involvement of the stakeholders would ultimately realized the project objective. However, the overall activities will be led and implemented by REST in collaboration with Oxfam GB. Moreover, as the key for the success of the project is lying on the hands of our target beneficiaries, all actors who are involved in the implementation of this project are expected to make beneficiaries become more ready and committed for the adoption of all types of technologies that are being proposed to be deployed.

For the execution and realization of the project objective, EU/OGB has approved a grant of 5.689 million Euro (more than 155 million birr) for the development of honey value chain activities. This budget will be utilized over the next five years. In addition to that, ground is well prepared to get credit accesses from Dedebit credit and saving institution. Around 120 million birr will be given to beneficiaries as credit to buy key materials which are useful to the intended project. Totally, more than 275 million birr is budgeted to the newly launched honey production project.

During the project launching ceremony, many participants were attended attentively. Tigray agricultural bureau, delegates of agricultural offices of the selected six woredas, land administration, REST higher officials and experts, Oxfam GB delegates and other concerned individuals and respective organizations were participated.

At the session, Mr. Teklewoini Asefa, REST executive director said, "Our white honey is white gold. If we compare our white honey with the others, it is very delicious, sweet and more expensive. Because of its sweetness and pureness some people in abroad called it white gold. Therefore, now it is time to promote our honey in air plane, market, and big

exhibitions to be sold worldwide and increase its economic value. To do so, we must support the producers to supply enough honey and feed the market as much as possible.”



His Excellency, Mr. Kiros Bitow, head agriculture and rural development, Tiray government regional state, forwarded fruit full messages at the closing session. First he appreciated for the donation of Oxfam GB and then he talked on behalf of the government, with the new launched and other existed projects, honey will be good economic value in the region. The government is well ready to support cooperatives, individuals who are engaged in honey development activities. As Kiros said, bee experts are deployed in each kebele and have strong linkage with the farmers as well as woreda experts. So, it is possible to have vast honey market and research hub in the region beyond bee keeping activities.

