

Environmentally aware mead brewer offers beekeeper-training

The Citizen reports that South African beekeepers struggle to generate enough honey for domestic and international demand for honey and its by-products - beeswax, propolis, royal jelly and bee venom, which are rich in carbohydrates, proteins and vitamins.

The practice of tending bees affects more than commercial food production. South African rural households in particular can derive economic benefits, as beekeeping becomes an important agricultural activity, aiming to meet export demand.

Since inception in 2000, Grahamstown-based brewery Makana Meadery (MM) has been producing iQhilika - a 20 000 year old South African honey-based alcoholic beverage. MM's mead is now sold in 37 American states, winning various overseas awards in the process. MM produces 150 000 bottles of mead every year, focusing on environmental best-practice: mead-making uses less water than producing wine, as it does not require cultivated land or irrigation, while beekeeping is an effective conservation tool. MM produces mead in an environmentally sustainable way. A sawmill on the MM premises manufactures wood for beehives. MM co-founder Garth Cambray is experimenting with converting sunflower oil into biodiesel on a larger scale in the province.

MM's beekeeping training is sought after in the Eastern Cape. Participants progress through two levels of training. The first level teaches basic beekeeping literacy and includes an introduction to honey extraction and processing. Participants learn how to maintain a small-scale beekeeping operation. During second phase training they learn to develop value-added products. According to *The Citizen*, up to 20 participants per group can receive beekeeping training in English, Afrikaans and Xhosa. This poverty-alleviating dimension of MM supports mostly rural women, helping them to tend bees successfully and sell their honey to local suppliers - including to MM.

Read the [full article](#) on www.citizen.co.za.