

## Article

# Organic Beekeeping Practices in Romania: Status and Perspectives towards a Sustainable Development

Cristina Bianca Pocol <sup>1</sup>, Peter Šedík <sup>2,\*</sup>, Ioan Sebastian Brumă <sup>3,\*</sup>, Antonio Amuza <sup>4</sup>  
and Aurica Chirsanova <sup>5</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> Department of Animal Production and Food Safety, University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Cluj Napoca, 400372 Cluj Napoca, Romania; cristina.pocol@usamvcluj.ro
- <sup>2</sup> Center for Research and Educational Projects, Faculty of Economics and Management, Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, Tr. A. Hlinku 2, 949 76 Nitra, Slovakia
- <sup>3</sup> “Gh. Zane” Institute for Economic and Social Research, Romanian Academy, Iași Branch, 700481 Iași, Romania
- <sup>4</sup> Department of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest, 030018 Bucharest, Romania; amuza.antonio@gmail.com
- <sup>5</sup> Department of Food and Nutrition, Technical University of Moldova, 168, Stefan cel Mare Bd., MD-2004 Chișinău, Moldova; aurica.chirsanova@toap.utm.md
- \* Correspondence: sedik.peter@gmail.com (P.Š.); sebastianbruma1978@gmail.com (I.S.B.)

**Abstract:** Romanian beekeeping faces a lot of challenges nowadays due to the problems related to climate change, the use of pesticides in agriculture, but also to the pandemic crisis. In this context, organic beekeeping represents an important alternative to traditional apicultural practices. The purpose of the study was to present the current situation of organic beekeeping in Romania, but also to identify some aspects related to sustainability. The research methodology was based on secondary and primary data. An online survey was conducted in 2020 on a sample of 433 Romanian beekeepers. The main findings showed that the majority of participants were aware of organic principles and were familiar with the concept of sustainability in beekeeping. However, only a small percentage of beekeepers were certified in the organic system. The evaluation of the concept of sustainability showed that the most important factor for the surveyed beekeepers was the environmental aspect, followed by the economic and social components. The pandemic crisis has negatively impacted the beekeepers’ activities due to travel restrictions and the limited access to the apiaries. If, in economic terms, they were affected by the sales drop in the first months of the crisis, there were also some positive effects such as the increase in demand for health-related products.

**Keywords:** beekeepers; organic practices; sustainability; pandemic crisis; challenges



**Citation:** Pocol, C.B.; Šedík, P.; Brumă, I.S.; Amuza, A.; Chirsanova, A. Organic Beekeeping Practices in Romania: Status and Perspectives towards a Sustainable Development. *Agriculture* **2021**, *11*, 281. <https://doi.org/10.3390/agriculture11040281>

Academic Editors:  
Małgorzata Bieńkowska and  
Anna Gajda

Received: 2 March 2021

Accepted: 22 March 2021

Published: 25 March 2021

**Publisher’s Note:** MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



**Copyright:** © 2021 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. The Importance of Beekeeping

Beekeeping is an archaic occupation as historical accounts of ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome reveal extensive knowledge on European honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) [1]. According to these records, honey is both a currency of commercial exchange and a commodity offered as a high-priced gift or as payment for certain levies [2]. There has been a strong connection between humans and bees since time immemorial, and this relationship relies heavily on the fact that 80% of the world’s plants are pollinated by bees [3], and, also, on the highly-nutritional, therapeutical [4], and economic value of their products [5]. In the case of transition economies and developing countries, beekeeping becomes a key occupation for generating additional revenues and a better resilience for the rural inhabitants [6,7]. Beekeeping is an activity which requires little capital, has a low-cost maintenance and generates revenues in a relatively short period of time [8]. Along with the economic benefits, beekeeping provides social advantages as well, since it ensures food security [9], improves quality of life in rural space [8], produces social cohesion, supports women empowerment,