

ABSTRACT

A comparative analysis of two beekeeping communities: Tobago Apicultural Society and the Association of Professional Beekeepers

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The formation of the Tobago Apicultural Society (TAS) in 1992 and the Association of Professional Beekeepers (AOPB) in 2001 was premised on similar antecedent circumstances which, coupled with the location of their respective geographic base at the furthest ends of Trinidad & Tobago, made them ideal candidates for a comparative analysis that focused on the characterisation of their membership and their current beekeeping status against the background of developments in the national beekeeping sector over the past 100 years.

The research project was designed to incorporate four standard design types, the appropriate use of which was informed mainly by the availability of data and the imperative of achieving the research objectives. The research approach relied on two formal and informal surveys, and data collected from primary and secondary sources. A 62 point questionnaire was administered to 36 active beekeepers in both communities, and the qualitative and quantitative data generated were collated for presentation using tables, histograms and charts. Measures of central tendency were used to describe the numerical data.

The research findings and analysis informed that the subject communities were on a declining curve which began around 1980 in Trinidad, and 2000 in Tobago. While both communities were ageing, the almost zero growth rate in the TAS community over the last 10 years was cause for alarm as the sustainability of beekeeping on the island was threatened. The high problematic rating given by respondents from both communities to basic beekeeping management issues suggested that astute management was not a common practise.

Otherwise, the research findings unearthed many similarities and differences in the beekeeping practices and patterns of both communities that relate to apiary and general management, and production and marketing issues.

The paper is the first known attempt at a comparative analysis of any two beekeeping communities in Trinidad and Tobago and, as such, presents two useful case studies of beekeeping in Tobago and southern Trinidad that will serve as a valuable addition to the sparse body of knowledge on the national beekeeping sector.