

# HONEY IN NEWS

NEWS, during its initiatives around mangrove restoration, realized that involvement of the community as partners always ensures sustainability. Long term impact can be achieved if the process and product of intervention is owned by the community. It was felt that as a collective, the honey gatherers could negotiate and bargain better with the buyers. To empower these marginal communities NEWS created a value chain, linking the gatherers to the end consumer. Within these two ends, the processes of collection, filtration, packaging, marketing and sale were included. The collective is a legal entity i.e. Badabon Farmers' Producers Company Limited with the brand name of Badabon Harvest. This initiative operates in the best interest of the farmers and the consumers in terms of quality and price.



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## SUSTAINABLE BEE KEEPING

An alternative to wild honey collection



www.naturewildlife.org

# HONEY FOR LIFE

“I just left my school mid way, rather skipped my board exams. The adrenaline rush in my body is making me restless as it's my first journey into the mangrove forest to collect honey. I am getting into my father's shoes after his death due to tiger attack last year. Memory of the loss sends a shiver down my spine as that could be my fate too. We are in constant conflict with tiger and crocodile. We have to find the way through muddy saltwater rivers, creeks and narrow channels .

Life in the village halts every time a group of Moulis go for collection of honey into the mangrove forests. The women dress up like widows in anticipation of the doomed fate. But the ambience changes to festivity the moment the group returns with the liquid gold. There is fun, frolic and food .

My uncle could not take this anxiety and moved to bee keeping but that made him a wanderer. The Italian colony of bees needed loads of nectar which the surroundings could not provide in the same place the year round. He had to keep moving to places where it was in blossom. But this did not suit me.

So, to feed my family I chose entering the forest .”

Nimai and the other honey gatherers are either surviving in a man-animal conflict situation or are forced to become wanderers. The wild honey collection process also creates anthropogenic pressure on forest. The fire and smoke that is used to drive away wild bees in the forest can seriously damage the ecosystem.

# HOME GROWN HONEY

A new initiative through the joint effort of **Nature Environment & Wildlife Society (NEWS)** and **Fullerton India** will try to address the difficulties faced by the community by

**‘Augmenting Livelihood Opportunities for the marginal communities of Sundarban through Sustainable Bee keeping’.**

The approach is to transition from wild honey collection in the forests to sustainable and settled bee keeping using a native variety of bee namely *Apis cerena indica* species. This native strain of bee is disease resistant and not a voracious eater as compared to the common Italian counterpart *Apis mellifera*. This species is also not a wanderer. To facilitate nectar security, the bee keepers or Bee Stewards will practice climate smart agriculture which will ensure that flowers are available throughout the year. The bees in turn will assist in pollination leading to more output as the colony is not destroyed during harvesting. This symbiotic relationship will help the colonies over the years and honey can be harvested with less time, investment and infrastructure.

The honey produced will be filtered, bottled and marketed by the existing **Badabon Farmers' Producers Company Limited**.



During the implementation across 2019-2020 in select places of 24 Parganas (Kumirmari at Gosaba Block and Samsernagar at Hingalganj Block), the interested community members will be provided hands on training and hand holding support on a range of exercises like bee keeping, vermi-composting, usage of non chemical fertilizers and pesticides, understanding and creating value chain. In addition, the 100 families will be supported by providing the basic infrastructure and there is an opportunity of earning Rs. 9000/- per year (in three bee boxes) increasing to Rs. 29000/- in 3 years. There is also a scope of additional income generation through vegetable farming on a scale above consumption level.

Thus the program will build resilient communities in tandem with sustainable resource management.