

## Catastrophic Honey Harvest

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After beekeepers lost more than 30% of bee colonies during the winter, they were further affected by frost and drought this year. Consequently, Slovenian beekeepers expect no more than 500 tonnes of honey this year, while last year they harvested 2,500 tonnes.

This year's acacia harvest, which represents about a third of the annual amount of honey, was severely affected by frost; the pine and maple pastures were also affected, which means that beekeepers had to feed their bees until June.

The chestnut and linden pastures were slightly better off, but the head of the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association Boštjan Noc nevertheless assesses this year's harvest as catastrophic.

Feeding the bees entails high costs and beekeepers this year spent twice as much sugar to feed their colonies than usual.

Although Noc believes that Slovenian consumers appreciate the quality of Slovenian honey, he nevertheless fears that stores will this year be flooded with cheap products from abroad.

The problems of beekeeping in Slovenia need to be tackled in a comprehensive way, Noc told the press in Lukovica near Ljubljana today.

He called on the Agriculture and Environment Ministry to activate the funds from the natural disaster relief scheme to help beekeepers cope.

The beekeepers' association presented their most burning problems to the ministry on Monday and received a promise that solutions will be found by the end of the year.

Noc pointed out that their requests did not entail any extra costs for the state budget but merely minor legislative changes that would enable them better working conditions.

Beekeepers propose that all beekeepers' associations be registered as associations working for the public interest. They would also like the ministry to draw up a national programme for the protection of Carniolan honey bee and set up a beekeeping institute.

They also believe that Slovenia should be registered as the country holding the herd book for the Carniolan honey bee within the EU.