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# **Beekeepers In the Global 'Fair Trade' Market: A Case From Tabora Region, Tanzania**

*Eleanor Fisher\**

## **Introduction**

The Tabora Beekeepers Cooperative Society LTD (TBCS) in Tanzania has sold honey under the logo 'African Queen' since the early 1960's. In 1989 Traidcraft, a British fair trade organisation, began to export the cooperative's honey to consumers in western Europe as a fair trade product. Traidcraft was subsequently joined by other organisations, notably Tropical Forest Products and Oxfam. In this article I wish to explore the significance of the fair trade market for the TBCS and a group of producers. 'Fair trade', as carried out by these organisations, implies a specific development agenda. It is hoped that the example of honey from Tanzania will contribute to an understanding of how the universality of the fair trade development agenda is translated into

practice in specific situations and underline some of the implications it holds for participants in fair trading.

The empirical material that is used, and indeed my interest in the topic, stems from research on wildlife conservation, community participation and diverse interests in a protected area, Ugalla Game Reserve, in Tabora and Rukwa regions of Tanzania. As it happens the woodland within this reserve is used extensively for beekeeping, and relatives of present day beekeepers were instrumental to establishing the Tabora Beekeepers Cooperative Society in 1956. Although peripheral to my main focus of attention, the research has raised some interesting questions about the role of fair trade organisations in the lives of people who are constituted as 'the producer' within the fair trade remit. This is also of relevance at the time of writing because the Fair Trade Foundation in Britain is in the process of trying to decide on fair trade conditions for African honey, specifically those of the TBCS.<sup>1</sup>

## **Ideas of 'Fair Trade' and the Role of the Consumer**

In 1994 'fair' or 'alternative' trade was

estimated to account for \$US 200 million of world trade per annum, a minor but significant market (Anon.c, 1994). At a pragmatic level fair trade embraces the idea that equitable trade relations between producers in developing countries and consumers in Europe and the USA, are a viable means towards improving the standard of life for people living in poverty in the south.

Despite concurrence on certain basic principles the term 'fair trade' encompasses a wide range of perspectives and activities carried out by 'alternative trade organisations' (ATO's), between whom there may be few other commonalities of interest. These ATO's are predominantly based in the north, at the consumer end of the market. They are usually wings of development and liberation groups or charitable NGO's. In Britain there are estimated to be twenty five ATO's, the most well known being 'Oxfam' and 'Traidcraft', that are networked internationally through organisations such as the European Fair Trade Association (Barratt Brown, 1993). In some contexts small ATO consortiums have been formed to buy and promote products, 'Cafedirect' for example (TWIN, 1994). A tepid brand of fair trade is

vaunted by some corporations, the Body Shop International's 'Trade not Aid' program being a case in point (BSI, 1994).

In the plea for fair trading, it is argued that structures of international trade are biased against developing countries and in so being are central to placing producers in the south in poverty. Hence the development of more equitable trade relationships can be a means for people to elevate themselves from this situation. In itself this is perceived to be a preferable alternative to aid donation where possible (Dalton, 1992; Madden, 1992). Emphasis in the work of ATO's is focused at small-scale production; less success has been achieved at governmental or other levels (Barratt Brown, 1993; Anon.c, 1994).

In contrast to classic economic wisdom and standard international trading practices, proponents of fair trade argue that it is commercially viable to pay producers a guaranteed, fixed price which reflects the production costs of goods harvested or made in non-exploitative working environments. Two key means towards this end are, (i), by the ATO operating on a non or low profit making basis, and, (ii), in attempting to cut out 'the middlemen' through acting as a key mediating organisation between producers

and consumers. Typically the ATO's role includes: locating suitable producer groups; encouraging value to be added at source; giving advice and credit; checking that quality standards are maintained; finding markets; packaging, distributed, and retailing (often by means of volunteers through outlets with low overheads); and attracting consumers to buy the goods (Coote, 1992; Barratt Brown, 1993).

Beyond these instrumental arguments are broader understandings and beliefs about development, the environment, and identity. Here we move more centrally into the realm of the northern consumer. It is clear that demands for fair trade, and the practices of buying and using such products, have arisen in association with specific lifestyles and conceptualisations of the world. Meaning is attributed to fair trade goods by the consumer in terms of complex notions of global relations, development, justice, and equality. Key criteria in discerning the value of a product derive not primarily from the relative merits of its price but the social, political, and economic relationships which the producer is perceived to hold to the consumer. The commodity is also likely to be 'healthy', or 'environmentally friendly', etc., but these associated

properties alone do not imbue an item with the specific meanings which connote 'fair'. In this respect 'fair trade' exemplifies an emerging type or types of network/s in which actors participating in the production, marketing and consumption of food and other goods are creating new relationships and meanings between commodity producers and consumers (Arce & Marsden, 1994, p.2).

The role of ATO's in re-organising terms of trade for producer groups in developing countries was briefly noted above. They also play a crucial part in delineating the connections between producers and consumers for the consumer. In the process, the ATO specifies and promotes the legitimacy of a particular development agenda, one with which the consumer is likely to concur. For example, in retail outlets such as Traidcraft and Oxfam Trading consumers are provided with information on basic universalised development issues and injustices, together with leaflets on actions which may be taken by the individual, in effect "giving a basic product a meaning which makes it stand out on the shelf" (TWIN, 1994, p.2).

It would be simplistic to suggest that the many diverse ATO's are all acting on a

single development agenda. However, if we take the examples of the British ATO's Oxfam Trading and Traidcraft Plc, who sell TBCS honey, their remit closely aligns with that of the charities/NGO's to which they are attached. In the case of fair trade, it is the means towards development which differs. Namely through trade and (from the ATO's point of view) the active, loyal consumer who chooses to exercise his or her buying power according to political and socio-cultural issues (Coote, 1992; Dalton, 1992; Maddon, 1992). The nature of development itself and the implicit ideas of modernity embodied in conceptions of fair trade do not appear to be brought into question.

From the point of view of the consumer's relationship to the ATO, it is significant that information published on packaging and in leaflets holds, as closely as possible, to approximate [representations of] 'the truth' about the product and the producer. Consumer trust in the ATO, and the ATO's accountability to those with whom it has dealings, is important. To this end some organisations are starting to adopt and publish a 'social audit' (Traidcraft, 1994; BSI pers. comm., July 1994). However, as I discovered in

researching this article, access to information beyond official publicity may be strictly limited. Another method of accountability to the consumer is the fair trade symbol (1993). This was introduced in Britain through the Fair Trade Foundation, an independent auditing body, following the success of the Max Havelaar Foundation and Transfair in Holland, Germany, and Switzerland. The symbol gives recognition to a shifting of concern from consumer issues at the receiving end of the market (safety, the environment) to the production end. For example in terms of producers' safety, careful use of expendable resources, etc. The role of a fair trade symbol in denoting a "producer friendly product" (Coote, 1992, p.181) becomes prominent in the push to market specific goods such as coffee, tea, and chocolate, in mainstream supermarkets (1993).

Advocacy is another facet of ATO initiatives. International businesses and governments are lobbied on issues such as protectionism, or simply, in the case of supermarkets, to stock a particular product. Efforts are also made to stimulate public debate, for example through the publication of trade recommendations (Coote, 1992, pp.184-191). Both ATO's and

individual consumers who are concerned about fair trade issues participate in such advocacy.<sup>2</sup> A recent report for the European Parliament leaves the impression that there is room for further action: "What can be expected of the EC in this field at present?... fair trade is still far too much the extreme exception to the rule of unfair trade" (Anon.c, 1994, p.11).

### **Tanzanian Honey and the Fair Trade Market**

There has been considerable expansion in the world demand for honey over the last twenty years (ITC, 1986). Significantly this is linked to greater [northern] consumer interest in natural or health products, changing eating habits, more aggressive marketing tactics, and increased industrial use of honey (ingredients lists regularly include honey to denote 'natural goodness'). Estimates suggest that three quarters of total world market consumption is as 'table honey', and in the UK and Holland this constitutes 90% of total consumption (ITC, 1986, p.72 & 94).

Tanzania is a minor supplier of honey in absolute as well as relative terms, as

indeed is Africa as a whole (ITC, 1986, p.11). Taste, color, and aroma are key features in the marketing and consumption of honey. Tanzanian honey is sold as liquid honey and is very dark and somewhat harsh on the palate. In effect this means that marketing has to be carefully targeted; for some consumers it is highly desirable, whilst for others it appears unattractive. The honey from Tabora, which this discussion is concerned with, is bought from a marketing cooperative called the Tabora Beekeepers Cooperative Society LTD (TBSCS) and exported by two main organisations, Traidcraft Plc, an ATO, and Tropical Forest Products, a small British business which trades in bee-products from Zambia and Tanzania. The manager of Tropical Forest Products prefers to define the organisation as a 'small-business' but for our purposes it can be considered to be an ATO.<sup>3</sup>

Traidcraft Plc sell 'Tabora honey' for £1.25 (1994) together with 'Sweet Justice Set Honey', 'Wild Blossom Chilean', and 'Organic Tropical Set Honey' by catalogue. They also retail Tabora honey in Holland, Germany, and Switzerland by means of the Max Havelaar/ Transfair fair trade seal. Oxfam buys Tanzanian honey from

Tropical Forest Products and, because the honey has the British Soil Association's organic symbol, sell it as 'Organic Forest Honey' for £1.45 (1994). Tropical Forest Products also markets Tabora honey directly under its own label in Britain and Holland, together with selling quantities for industrial uses, for example in 'Jordans' breakfast cereals, and to the Body Shop International, together with Zambian beeswax, to be made into a 'Honey-stick' lip salve in the USA and marketed internationally. At present the honey is largely sold on a niche market in which a consumer may actively need to go out of his or her way to buy the product.

The packaging of Tabora honey by Oxfam, Tropical Forest Products and Traidcraft draws on a number of powerful elements. As the label on one honey jar states:

*"This honey, gathered from wild bees, is produced using centuries old traditional methods which are in harmony with the forest. Deep in the forest, bark hives are hung high in the trees, out of the reach of army ants and honey badgers. A wild swarm occupies the hive and after a couple of years the beekeeper crops the honey leaving some for the bees".*

*"Our tropical forests are still under*

*constant threat. By buying this product you support the Tanzanian beekeepers' own company, TBCS LTD in their traditional use of the forest. The survival of the forests depends on the local people continuing to benefit from them"* ('Organic Forest Honey' sold by Oxfam (1994) and marketed under the British Soil Association's Organic Symbol).

In this depiction, the honey is organic and therefore good to consume; descriptions of tropical forests and wild bees give it substance as intrinsically natural, which combines with culture through narratives of traditional, harmonious production methods. And, in the accompanying literature, the beekeeper-producer is personalised and placed prominently within a global market (Oxfam honey, 1993; Traidcraft honey, 1994; Tropical Forest Products, 1994).

The specific class of item 'Tabora honey' is but a minor spread or accompaniment within the large repertoire of different foods that are bought and eaten by western consumers. The honey is part of particular lifestyles in which a key feature is variety, choice, and rapid change in the products consumed. I would argue, fair trade honey is given significance and gains its value by being held as more than a



food. As suggested above, knowledge of where the honey has been produced is connected to a wider set of cultural and political understandings in which the consumer, through his or her ability to choose, is located as an active participant (Arce & Marsden, 1994, p.7). In so being honey becomes symbolic of the consumers lifestyle and ideas of self-identity.

Fair trade public information provides numerous photographic depiction's of producers and their families in developing countries, and in doing so exposes people behind the products we consume where other trade renders these self-same people invisible. This focus in itself is important, but it becomes apparent that the illusion of a specific, unique 'biography' is given to items which are in fact a whole 'class of goods' with relatively indistinct origins (Appadurai, 1986, pp.16-17).<sup>4</sup> In the following discussion, with reference to Tabora honey, I wish to explore the origins of Tabora honey and raise a number of issues that have a bearing on the nature of fair trade and its implications at the local level in Tanzania.

Firstly, different values and quality referents have been constructed around the honey by the time it is sold in Europe such that it may embody a concept of 'fair'

when associated with the consumers own ideas.<sup>5</sup> But in what manner does this relate to producers' ideas and actions, or indeed those of other agents in Tanzania? An understanding of this issue will be highly revealing of how knowledge, values, and quality become properties within the fair trade network, and the manner in which they are transformed and controlled by different actors.

Secondly, in terms of producers and fair trade interventions in practice: it can be put forward that honey, and indeed beeswax, cannot be viewed solely as tradeable commodities dissociated from the wider context in which the production and marketing of bee-produce occurs. From the time honey-comb is extracted, the produce is manipulated, divided and given value in accord with a beekeeper's strategies, life projects and identity. Honey and wax are used to fulfill different and individual ends in the lives of the beekeeper and his family.

It will become apparent that honey and wax are key elements in a number of distinct and separate networks of production and consumption stretching from local to international levels, each conferring on a portion of the product [honey, beeswax] different life-histories.

The networks are elaborate and can by no means be reduced to linear chains of production, processing, marketing, and consumption. Crucial to a consideration of trade relations and fair trade interventions is the fact that these networks are inter-connected and contemporaneous only at the local level in western Tanzania, though even at this level certain networks may co-exist without being associated.

This leads to a series of questions: where does 'fair trade' enter into these networks? How is it drawn into the social relationships, knowledge and practices of the beekeeper and other actors associated with honey and beeswax? What are the consequences of fair trade interventions in relation to both the spectrum of beekeepers' strategies (those related to beekeeping), and the trade networks for honey and beeswax? Furthermore, to what extent do different agents have room to maneuver within these networks, specifically in relation to the fair trade connection at the local level?

## **The Origins and Development of the Tabora Beekeepers Cooperative Society**

In this section I wish to introduce the TBCS, briefly locating it within the wider developmental context of Tanzania. It will become apparent that the ATOs are buying from a Cooperative and producers who have extensive past experience with other forms of intervention. The organisation itself formed under the influence of 'Beeswax Smith' of the colonial Beekeeping Section. This is significant because 'fair trade' in effect overlays older ways of responding to external assistance together with other forms of association between beekeepers.<sup>6</sup> In addition, I would argue that the alternative trade organisations, Traidcraft<sup>7</sup> and Tropical Forest Products, have stepped into the operations of the Cooperative and become important to it at a time when the original initiators of the project, the Catholic church, are no longer involved in its management, and when state institutions, notably the cooperative unions and national banking system, cannot offer these critical forms of support. Given that cooperatives appear to be out of favor in the present political and

economic climate of Tanzania, and given also, as my empirical material suggests, that various local markets for bee-produce exist it is an interesting and important question to ask to what extent and why a cooperative like the TBCS continues to hold relevance for beekeepers. In addition, does the presence of the fair trade market play any role in this continued relevance?

The TBCS honey plant is located in the village of Itetemia ten kilometres from Tabora, the capital of Tabora Region in western Tanzania. It began in 1956 as the Tanganyika Honey Organisation under the influence, as I suggested above, of the Government Beekeeping Section, in association with the Catholic church. Six priests came together with two primary school teachers and a local catechist, George Ntiyama. Ntiyama was a hunter and beekeeper who is now an old man and referred to as 'klongozi wetu' (our leader). Once suspicions over government taxation of beehives was alleviated (Ntenga, nd.), the group gained support from men who went in the dry season to fish, hunt, honey-hunt, keep bees, and hold their ngoma near the Ugalla River where many had originated in the 1920's.<sup>8</sup> These men were already part of a fishing association that descendants hold to have

'given birth' to the TBCS. In the process the Cooperative gained strong grass-roots direction which, arguably, still persists today.

From the point of view of the Catholic church the original aim of the Cooperative was to assist people to raise their standard of living 'alleviating poverty and hunger' through providing a collective means to market high quality, clean honey for a good price (Mss.TBCS, Tabora Archdiocese Archives).<sup>9</sup> This was aligned with plans by the Beekeeping Division to extensively promote beekeeping in Tanganyika (Smith, 1956). Today, a beekeeper with 100+ hives pays a membership share of TShs.2000 and commits himself to selling all his produce - bar two buckets of honey - to the TBCS. In return he can obtain transport, containers, and a guaranteed market. The TBCS was, and is, essentially a marketing cooperative supplying inputs (transport & containers) to individual producers and exporting honey.

Initially, in the late 1950's and 1960's, financial support came from membership shares, the Catholic church, and a grant provided by a German Christian organisation. Honey was first processed at the Government Beekeeping Section based

in Tabora, where encouragement and technical advice was available. Archbishop Bronsveld of Tabora Archdiocese permitted the White Fathers to carry out business activities, and a small market for honey was subsequently established with White Fathers in Northern Rhodesia. Wax was peripheral, sold privately to Asian middlemen by George Ntiyama to assist beekeepers in paying their taxes. Following Independence President Nyerere refused to trade with 'racist [African] countries' giving the impetus for a market to be found in Europe (Mss.TBCS, Tabora Archdiocese archives; Ntenga, Pers. Comm.).

I would suggest that historically support for the TBCS by beekeepers is linked to the fact that it has assisted men to develop a lucrative occupation in keeping with their way of life and the natural resources in the region. Beekeeping or honey-hunting is part of the family and clan identity of many who carry out the occupation. Boys can learn a skill from their fathers or another family member (as contrasted with formal education) and, importantly, it gives men an autonomy where to other intents and purposes they are 'farmers'.<sup>10</sup> Interventions by the Tanzanian state in honey or wax production have been more

peripheral than in other aspects of people's lives and membership of the TBCS does not conflict with their lifestyles or sense of autonomy.

I do not wish to dwell on the subject of cooperatives as a whole in Tanzania but it is necessary to contextualise the development of the TBCS (for general information see: Cooperative College/Afro-Aid, 1991; Forster & Maghimbi, 1992; Maghimbi, 1988). In 1967 the Arusha Declaration by President Nyerere, firmly committed Tanzania to the path of 'Ujamaa na kujitegemea' (socialism and self-reliance). So, it is necessary at least to mention that from 1968, the second five year economic plan made explicit the fact that the cooperative movement was a means towards the growth of socialism and cooperatives were to be viewed as socialist institutions. From 1968 into the 1980's the unit of 'the cooperative' was the focus of successive forms of national development planning and, by implication, cooperatives have been one of the arenas in which the successes and failures of post-independence development have been created and reflected.

It has been difficult to ascertain how the TBCS stood during the late 1960's and 1970's. In 1972, President Nyerere himself

expressed the wish that the Cooperative should remain independent of a cooperative union because the White Fathers had 'the trust of the people' (Mss.TBCS Tabora Archdiocese archives). This slight autonomy seems to have been the general tenor on which the TBCS continued to operate. The respective White Fathers who acted as managers worked very actively for the Cooperative, and continued to export abroad and the TBCS appears to have been buffered to a certain extent from certain wider political and economic processes of change particularly those that were so detrimental to many businesses during this period. On more specific details of the relationships between beekeeper-members and the cooperative there is no reliable information.

In 1979, following changes in legislation, only the national exporting corporations GAPEX and NOTCO could handle TBCS produce.<sup>11</sup> The malpractices of these corporations are locally held to have lost the Cooperative its export market, but more probably marketing inefficiencies were a trigger to a range of negative consequences - both internal and external - which reflected in the considerable financial losses experienced

by the Cooperative in 1985, 1986, and 1987. This was expressed through extreme difficulties in obtaining vehicle parts, diesel, honey containers, and finance to pay members for produce (to the extent that payments were often deferred for up to a year). In sum the TBCS struggled to stay afloat and the number of active members declined dramatically from 6,156 in the early 1980's to 1,306 in 1994. Correspondingly, there was a reduction in produce sales to the TBCS by members, notably of beeswax. Oral accounts of this period suggest that honey was in wide demand because sugar could not be obtained and therefore it could be easily sold locally.

The early 1980's are typically given the blanket characterisation of a period of 'stagnation' in Tanzania's national economy (World Bank, 1991). In 1984 currency devaluation and moves towards economic liberalisation were instigated and two years later brought into line with an IMF and World Bank structural adjustment package. Multilateral donor involvement continued to take place at the time of research. Market reform at the national level together with the wider political and social changes that are occurring in Tanzania is a background to

this article. Through the TBCS and the lives of people involved in beekeeping one can see ways in which apparent national changes are, and indeed are not, given relevance at regional and local levels at present. In order to highlight this some general comments must be made:

At present Tanzanian cooperatives are operating within a difficult climate. The structural adjustment program has broadly supported medium and larger scale enterprise development, but has not been favorable to cooperatives and the cooperative unions which have a history of massive corruption and inefficiency. Problems are notably reflected in a tightening of bank-lending leading to lack of credit and working capital which has been experienced by the TBCS. The removal of restrictions on individual and private trade in bee-produce from 1986 introduced a new element of competition, which the TBCS specifically finds hard to withstand. This also has a positive aspect, though, because economic liberalization policies have indirectly facilitated business through greater access to inputs, transportation, markets, etc.

Increased levels of entrepreneurial activity through local, regional and national levels, are reflected in a rise in

petty-trade associated with bee-produce. For beekeepers this has led to wider sales options for produce, which in itself may be conceived as a positive. But this should not detract from the reservation that most possibilities remain highly contingent and appear to give little long-term support to the producers. Indeed changing livelihood opportunities may not mean that peoples' lives are any less precarious, and in terms of the research noted below, appear far removed from Booth's most optimistic-case scenario of a "broadly-based process of growing economic integration" taking place in rural Tanzania, being more in keeping with "an extension of the processes that emerged as people's survival strategies" from the 1970's and into the 1980's (Booth, 1994, p.55).

At the national and international levels, export incentive schemes have increased the volume and range of non-traditional exports (Mbatia, 1993; Bol, 1993). This has interesting implications for beekeepers as well as for the cooperative. Beeswax, in particular, has started to play a role in the export-import business which has flourished in recent years in the hands of those sectors of the business community (in this case the Tabora and Dar Es Salaam Asians) who

had previous international connections and supplies of hard currency (Chachage, 1994). In the illustrations outlined below this is the market in which the beekeepers sell most of their wax.

### **Administrative Organisation of the Cooperative**

The administrative structure of the Cooperative appears to have remained relatively the same since 1962. Being a cooperative, the TBCS is in principle a democratic member organisation. Its structure is split between the producers and the paid employees. In 1993/94 there were 33 full time employees under the control of elected representatives from the 1,306 member-beekeepers. The beekeepers themselves are grouped into 36 local branches in Tabora, Shinyanga, Rukwa, and Mbeya Regions.

Today, in practice, at the heart of power relations within the Cooperative is, firstly, a cleavage between the management and producer representatives and secondly, differential degrees of influence among the producers' representatives from the 36 branches. Unsurprisingly, alliances and divisions within the producers, and

between them and the management are crucial to the functioning of the Cooperative. The role of the Manager must be stressed, he was trained as an accountant by the White Fathers from 1969 and took over in 1984. He is highly articulate and charismatic, with a good command of English. In his management he has readily taken over the 'one-man-does-all' style established by the priests. All dealings with the TBCS by both outsiders and beekeepers are, effectively, dealings with him. He plays a crucial 'gate-keeper' role in the fair trade network between ATO's and producers, and actively tries to maintain this.

### **The TBCS And Alternative Trade Organisations**

In 1987 the British organisation Traidcraft Exchange became involved with the Tabora Beekeepers Cooperative Society as part of a program to support four small businesses in Tanzania. It is customary for ATO's to link with producers through a mediating organisation that provide some form of collectivity. For Traidcraft, the post-Independence 'socialist' principles of the Tanzanian Government were,

ironically, seen as attractive<sup>12</sup>. In the specific case of the TBCS, it is a small export enterprise with a good relationship to producers and an organizational structure that was perceived to align with Traidcraft's Christian ethics and guiding principles (TX report, 1992).

To date, Traidcraft has played a pivotal role in assisting the Cooperative to attain short-term financial viability. Indirect assistance is estimated to have been in the region of £85,000 (Traidcraft Exchange, Social Audit, 1993-94), including support from the British ODA, and has contributed: health and safety facilities, staff training, honey containers, vehicle maintenance, financial and quality control advice, marketing assistance, etc. In 1994 Traidcraft Plc began to enable the producers to receive 60% of produce payments immediately.

Traidcraft Exchange encouraged Traidcraft Plc to buy 6 tonnes of Tabora Honey in 1989/90, representing 7% of total honey production of the Cooperative. In 1990/91 13 tonnes of honey were bought, equivalent to 4.5% of total produce. As of 1993/94 Traidcraft Plc made a commitment to buy 54 tonnes of produce per annum (until 1997/98) which in 1993 encompassed 50% of total honey

production, and in 1994 95%.

Tropical Forest Products (TFP) is the TBCS's other major buyer. In 1991 the company bought 56 tonnes of honey, followed by 26 tonnes (1992), and 54 tonnes (1993). In 1994 TFP could not obtain honey since the total harvest was only in the region of 55-60 tonnes. The Cooperative was unable to sustain its export commitment to both organisations opting in favor of Traidcraft Plc who offer a higher price. Aside from this there have been once-off international sales (for instance, 0.3 tonnes of honey to Dubai in 1991 and relatively minor quantities of honey to ATO's in Sweden and Holland). Very negligible quantities of wax are collected for which there is no regular market at present.

Small domestic sales take place, although trying to service both export and local markets can create conflicts: in 1993/94 all the honey was pledged to the export market causing anger amongst honey-beer brewers in the village of Kipalapala. This was expressed through personal complaints to the Manager who himself owns a honey-beer business.<sup>13</sup> The TBCS Manager does not hold the domestic market to be a viable option for sales, he argues that "there is no capital"



with which to develop this market. Whilst this fact may be partially true, in my view domestic sales necessitate greater accountability over funds which are periodically 'borrowed' for the personal projects of members of the management, an issue which was made clear at the 1993 AGM. "It is a problem overseas" is a reply which can be given to many awkward questions by beekeeper-members regarding finances, and hard for the producers to dispute (TBCS minutes, 1993 AGM). The fact that the Cooperative does not pursue the national domestic market may severely undermine it in the long-run as other traders take up the opportunity; one Tabora Asian, for example, is at present in the process of building a honey-plant.

If we look at the percentage of sales from the TBCS to the fair trade export market we can see that it has increased considerably, beginning in 1989 at 11%, in 1990 5%, 1991 39%, 1992 35%, in 1993 (due to high sales and poor year) 98%, and an estimated 95% in 1994. In sum, considering both the support which has been given to the organisation and to its actual exports, it is not incorrect to state that the alternative trade organisations have come to occupy a dominant role in

relation to the TBCS. One point should be emphasized though: the respective ATO's in no way act as a collective body. They may be ignorant of each others operations and there are often considerable differences in opinion between them.

### **Different, and Sometimes Conflicting, Areas of Interest: Producers, the TbcS Manager, and Atos**

During my visits to the Cooperative it became apparent that the fair trade organisations, most notably Traidcraft, had at different times raised a number of policy issues with the Manager. The Manager, likewise, had his own particular viewpoints, the subject of which would be the focus of explosive comments directed at those present. Similarly the beekeepers and their representatives had a number of vital concerns which were the subject of conversation and would also be raised formally at the quarterly and annual meetings.<sup>14</sup>

It quickly became clear that only certain of the ATO policy objectives intersected in any way with the concerns of either the Manager on the one hand or

the beekeepers on the other. It is noteworthy that subjects given most attention, in so far as becoming a part of formal and informal discussion, were those that could be translated into issues of relevance within the cooperative or amongst the producers. It was also apparent that many worries of the producers were not items within the ATO objectives; indeed there was no mechanism to bring those worries to the attention of ATO representatives. In the case of the manager there was more middle-ground because of his regular dealings with overseas customers and role in exporting produce, coupled with an excellent command of English which facilitated access to the ATO's and placed him in a key mediating position between the different ATO's and the producers.

General issues raised in association with the ATOs were: gender (by Traidcraft Plc and the Body Shop International), environmental sustainability (by Traidcraft Exchange and Plc and the Body Shop International), democracy (by the Body Shop International), the price of produce (by Traidcraft Plc, Tropical Forest Products), the lack of ability to obtain beeswax (by Tropical Forest Products), management of the Cooperative (by

Traidcraft Exchange and Tropical Forest Products), health and safety at work, and the quality of produce (by Traidcraft Plc and Tropical Forest Products). Tropical Forest Products may have been expressing views put forward by Oxfam but I do not know the details.

For the TBCS manager subjects of concern tended to be based on the everyday running of the Cooperative and dealing with the export market. Continuous themes were: communications with DSM and abroad (trying to telephone, telex or send a fax could take several days especially during the rains), problems with the lorries (there were four but usually only one was on the road), negotiations to obtain credit from the banks in Tabora, ATO's and aid donors such as the British ODA, new orders for containers, produce transportation problems between Tabora and Europe, various money making schemes.

For beekeepers key issues were: difficulties in obtaining transport to and from their camps at the appropriate times (bees drink the honey very quickly after the dry-season begins and by the time harvesting has finished the beekeepers have themselves run out of food). For

some, entry permits to Ugalla Game Reserve, theft, not being given immediate payments for their produce, wishing to be paid the profits resulting from their shares in the cooperative, the attempt to obtain a new white manager who would return the cooperative to the days when there were [apparently, in retrospect] no problems with money, the low-price paid for beeswax. In 1993 the price of honey was not an issue because it had recently been raised, nor was the fact that they had insufficient containers due to the honey crop being bad, but in other years these topics had been the focus of debates.

I want to turn to an example of how an issue which derived from overseas was taken up by the manager and producers. In this instance it was rejected [?]; but this in itself does not detract from the manner in which an idea associated with the fair trade market is made relevant by different agents at the local level. It will rapidly become clear that in this, as in many issues, I was drawn into the centre stage as different people sought to use me as a means to further their particular ends; and beekeepers tried to place me, as a European with numerous resources (money, transport, information, access to officials, etc.), in their strategies, certainly

in the bush.

In August 1993 the subject of producing honey without the use of smoke became an issue at the Cooperative level. I should explain that African bees can be extremely viscous and will often attack in large numbers as one approaches the hive. Some beekeepers harvest at night (when the bees are calm), others make their own protective clothing. Many say that they are used to the bee-stings which are held to stop illness and anyway -"nyuki ni mali, hatuogopi" ['Bees Are Wealth' (a well known catch-phrase) we're not afraid]. Men in the area of my research used copious amounts of smoke when harvesting, which has the effect of subduing the bees.

### **11th August 1993 at Martin Steven's house:**

Martin Steven raised the question of smokeless honey and bee-protectives to me. As I understood it Masanja [the TBCS Manager] had asked him [as chairman of the local branch] to speak to branch members about producing honey without the use of smoke. Martin Steven supported the idea because Masanja had

said that he could get a high price for honey not tainted (apparently) with the taste of smoke. He asked Mama Justus [my research assistant and a senior trainer at the beekeeping college] where members could get protectives from. He was most anxious that both I and Mama Justus should attend the meeting "to educate them".

**Later at the honey factory I was in conversation with Masanja, the Manager:**

Ele: "I heard from Martin Steven that you are trying to start people harvesting honey without the use of smoke"?

Masanja: "Yes we are, these German buyers say they don't like the taste, they can taste the smoke in it [said laughing at the Germans]. There is a market for this honey and we could obtain a high price".

Ele: "But isn't there a problem in that they need protectives but don't have any [I was voicing the opinion of MS]"?

Masanja: "Because they don't want to pay for them".

Ele: "But they would if they [the protectives] were there [i.e. obtainable]".

Masanja: "There are people who make them, look, there is a soldier who makes

them and there is someone at the [beekeeping] college".

Ele: "But those protectives aren't adequate for harvesting without the use of any smoke [not actually correct]".

Masanja: "Well maybe the manufacturers aren't linked to beekeeping practices. Look the chairman, that Makonyaga, harvests honey without smoke. In Europe they will pay a higher price. The TBCS is going to start offering beekeepers an incentive for this".

**The next day at the honey factory:**

A group of old men were waiting for the meeting, most of whom knew me relatively well because I'd lived with them in the bush, the others said "Masanja's inside" presuming I had only come to see the manager. The talk was about payments, it was August the twelfth and they still hadn't been paid for the June harvest, they muttered quietly about how bad this was using the local language and keeping their voices down.

A young man wearing black shades and sleek second hand market clothes sauntered over and sat beside me to draw the attention of his friends. The branch

chairman was late: "if he doesn't start by 3.30"... and he snapped his fingers to indicate his group would leave. They proceeded to join in the conversation about payments raising their voices to express how much they needed the money [this was partly defiant against the older men but also at this point they twisted the conversation to direct it at me by using Kiswahili, not the local language, to ensure I understood properly].

Martin Steven, the Chairman, sat at the front with the branch Secretary and Agent. The meeting began with a half-hearted rendition of the beekeepers song. Afterwards Martin Steven explained that there was a market in places like the U.S. if they harvested without using smoke and the price for this was high. Several men stood in turn and after long introductory speeches pointed out that if they had protective clothing this could be done, getting bee-protectives however was a problem. They started to say that it would cost Tshs.10,000 for one set of protectives and they would need two sets altogether [for the harvester and his helper] and also gloves and boots. It was generally agreed that if something was done about getting protectives they would start to try to harvest without smoke. Absalom Kayuga

proposed that there should be two grades of honey, one harvested with smoke and one without.

Martin Steven had made several references to me and asked if I wanted to say anything [prompting me to lecture them]. I suggested [avoiding the lecture actually due to shyness about making mistakes with the formalities and language in front of such a large meeting] that they should ask the manager if he could provide them with protectives. Martin Steven then told me to bring my good bee-protectives to demonstrate them. I put my protectives and veil on and paraded around to a general consensus that this was what they needed.

**The next day out making bark hives in the forest near the village with another beekeeper, Absalom Kayuga:**

AK: "...yes, its a good idea to have smokeless honey and improve oneself up in life. Beekeeping is something which people can do and it can really bring a lot of money, [after all] I can't learn to drive if I have no car". I did not hear the issue discussed again. Conversation around

this date regularly turned instead to the more pressing subject of when they would receive payments for the June harvest.

**In October Martin Steven had been taken to an international beekeeping meeting in Arusha:**

MS: "...they use the toilets to make electricity [presumably utilizing methane] and can farm all year round...We were told that beekeepers here [Tabora Region] do not keep bees properly near the villages".

Ele: Did you ask them about harvesting hives without using smoke?

MS: "Aah wapi, they said there is no problem, the wazungu [white people] use smoke, eisay"!

I did not hear the subject mentioned again.

If we turn back to when the idea of smokeless honey was raised; it was obviously something the Manager of the TBCS had heard informally as being a problem with TBCS honey for the German market from someone at Traidcraft. Typically, he had then taken the idea up, giving it his particular bias to in perceiving 'smokeless honey' to be a lucrative new market. This possibility appealed to Martin

Steven personally but it was also in keeping with his role as branch chairman to promote the idea to members. He linked the idea through experience to a new problem, lack of protective clothing, and turned to myself and my research assistant to support his argument.

There were two key features of the conversation which were not made overt: the first was the fact that the use of fire when harvesting relates to a particular way of making, hanging and harvesting bee-hives. Masanja, the manager (who significantly is not a beekeeper himself) alluded to the chairman of the Cooperative, Makonyaga, who comes from a different area where they make very large log hives which are harvested in the tree without the use of smoke. Without elaborating in too much detail, men tend to learn from and imitate ('follow' is the expression used) one key beekeeper. To stop using smoke might have necessitated the task of trying to learn techniques with which they were unfamiliar, together with the different techniques being those of people from another area.<sup>15</sup>

The second, more prominent, feature was the fact that the need for protective-clothing was not perceived as a concern by the men among themselves, who found

smoke adequate. But foreigners coming to the Cooperative have regularly seen this as a top priority and in the past donated free protective-clothing. As the Manager very neatly pointed out, the beekeepers did not want to pay for them, these were items associated with foreign aid. Martin Steven invited me to the meeting to support and promote his point of view, but in so doing he encouraged the other members to connect the idea itself with me. Once at the meeting, the beekeepers, particularly the younger members, turned the conversation on me both as if it was my idea and I had access to the solution. Three weeks earlier, at the end of the harvest, a group of beekeepers walked many kilometers to ask me to buy several drums of their honey, afterwards Martin Steven tried to explain that they thought I wouldn't, not, as I saw it, I couldn't. In this instance and in the context of the Cooperative factory I believe I was taken to represent an unseen aid donor as well as being a stereotypical *mzungu* (white person).

Protectives can be made for about the price of a bucket of honey half the high price of Tshs.10,000 that they proposed and nor would the men have used boots or gloves (which make climbing trees and

cutting the comb out of the hive very difficult). My role was encapsulated clearly in the comments directed at my own protective clothing for beekeeping. By virtue of the fact that I was wearing them they were treated as an excellent import which would offer super-protection whereas in fact they were clean local ones I had myself borrowed.

In fact the most pressing concern of the beekeepers present was obtaining payments for the June harvest. They would not have denied the opportunity to make additional money but getting access to what they had already earned was of more concern. Some, like Absalom Kayuga, an ex-policeman, saw 'smokeless honey' as a good possibility for people to move on in life and made the innovative suggestion of introducing two grades of produce, but in the event Martin Steven obtained little support and was able to draw on the authority of the Arusha meeting and modern European beekeeping methods to reduce the idea back to a problem about smoke and dismiss it.

This is but one example of an idea stimulated by the fair trade connection, in this case it had not been put to the Manager directly, but this was not unusual. The role of the Manager in

adeptly mediating and manipulating information between producers, other members of the TBCS, and the ATO's should be stressed. Other ideas were promoted more directly by the ATO's, most prominently by Traidcraft. Interestingly the organisations appear to be trying to make the TBCS align to ideas of an appropriate 'fair trade association' particularly in light of the development of 'social audits' (Traidcraft Exchange, 1994; Body Shop, pers.comm.) and (certainly in Britain) the symbol of the Fair Trade Foundation necessitate inspections of producer groups to ensure they accord with fair trade criteria. Given that the TBCS and beekeeping in the region are almost exclusively male domains, and also many beekeepers debark large numbers of trees in order to make hives this was particularly apparent in regard to gender issues and environmental sustainability. One can also see, as in the case of local women and a proposed candle-making project, that the method of going about this - by a trade organisation - was in keeping with the manner an aid donor's development project would be set up.

I can find no evidence of an issue which was initiated solely by the producers and subsequently taken up by

one of the ATO's. Indeed many local issues were out of keeping with fair trade ideas. One example will make this apparent: a group of beekeepers backed the main chairman over his complaints about the misuse of funds by the management. Their solution was to find a second manager who could control the first, and specifically this person had to be white. As I understood it this was because the role model of a good manager was perceived to be a Catholic White Father. After long negotiations it was reported to me that the Archbishop turned them down on the basis that a white manager would be too expensive nowadays. The offending chairman was subsequently ousted. It is only when producers issues intersected and are in keeping with those of the ATO that they find any mileage in relation to ATO policy and practice.

The relationship between producers and the respective ATOs may not be based on a two way flow of communication but the Cooperative and producers do have room to manoeuvre in relation to the ATOs. As I suggested above, the fair trade issues that are taken up by the producers and manager were those which can be translated into local issues. In some instances this was highly effective, most



notably in connection with Traidcraft's pricing policies that led to rises in the price of honey. Judging by the limited evidence of odd comments and past AGM minutes in this case the ATO concerned inadvertently gave the producers leverage against the manager who was trying to restrain price rises. In other instances fair trade ideas find no leeway for debate or support even if readily understood, clearly the case with the issue of debarking trees to make hives. To stop this would necessitate a massive change in the practices and beliefs of the beekeepers and is not perceived as necessary, certainly according to the discussions with many beekeepers on issues related to deforestation and resource utilization. The ATOs give the TBCS and producers some lee-way, and in addition the Manager is very good at maintaining it.

### **The 'Fair-trade Producers'**

In July 1994 group discussions I held with beekeepers revealed that, to them, the TBCS export market is not distinguished from other markets in terms which might connote a 'fair deal' (moral/social/ economic). Fair trade is a

market, which is seen as very positive, but not a particular type of market. The abstract idea of 'a good [equated with high] price' obviously obtained consensus, but specific TBCS price rises were linked to members success in making claims to the management (TBCS AGM minutes, 1988-1993) not the simultaneous Traidcraft interventions. Also, against Traidcraft's claim that it pays "55% above the local market price", there is not a single local price and local prices are, on average, favorably comparable (Traidcraft Social Audit, 1994, p.7).

Some beekeepers knew the name 'Traidcraft', associating it with an aid organisation. As the example of 'smokeless honey' revealed they were adept at manipulating the need for foreign aid and portraying themselves (probably through long experience with the Catholic and Moravian churches?) in a manner that would assist in securing it. This enables people to use aid for their own particular ends. On the occasions when they were able to hold formal discussions with an ATO representative (e.g. for the social audit) the representatives concerned did not have any local knowledge against which to judge claims. For example, as above, when it was believed there would

be a chance of obtaining protective clothing, or in regard to honey buckets (which are both affordable and used within a wide radius of Tabora for water carrying), apparent in reports (Traidcraft, 1989, p.17; 1992). These TBCS members did not distinguish between the intricacies of 'aid' and 'fair trade' associating Traidcraft with an aid agency.

I was frequently asked what happens to produce, especially wax. The young male beekeepers I stayed with spent hours examining Oxfam, Traidcraft, and Body Shop advertising leaflets, to my extreme embarrassment and their incredulity. Widely held images of Europe as the land of milk and honey were confirmed, 'Ulaya ndogo' ('little Europe') was used to describe areas in the forest with abundant nectar sources.

This underlines the one-way nature of fair trade PR information - from fair trade organisation to consumer - and the considerable gaps in knowledge between producer, ATO, and consumer. It also highlights the fact that from the producers point of view key concerns are at the level of the TBCS itself, not its overseas connections. The 1,306 members constitute 'the producers' whom Traidcraft and Oxfam (Traidcraft, 1994; Oxfam,

1993), amongst others, herald as benefiting from fairly traded honey, but they don't actively decide to participate on a 'fair trade' market.

When considering how the fair trade network operates this has significant implications: total knowledge of the network is not needed by even key actors in order for trade to operate. In addition this is highly indicative of the nature of **fair trade** as being primarily a conception formulated and held by organisations and consumers based at the northern consumption end of the network. Beekeepers may benefit by gaining a market, but this is not perceived in 'fair terms'.

Because producers don't interact directly with the ATO's the focus of concern for the rest of the discussion is on the relationship between beekeepers and the TBCS, not with the ATOs specifically.

### **TBCS Membership**

Official estimates indicate that in Tabora Region alone some 12,910 men keep bees (Regional Beekeeping Officer, pers. comm., 1993).<sup>16</sup> In contrast to this figure there are approximately 1,306

beekeeper members of the Tabora Beekeepers Cooperative Society. This raises three questions: who are the few beekeepers who decide to join the TBCS, in effect becoming the "niche" fair trade producers? And, given the high number of beekeepers, how important is beekeeping as a source of income for individuals? A third question readily follows which I will turn to later, if there are so many beekeepers what alternative markets for produce exist outside the TBCS?

To understand which beekeepers are TBCS members, two issues need to be distinguished: the first concerns the length of time an individual has been keeping bees and composition of a beekeeping camp as a whole, and the second relates to geographical variation in membership.

Men typically start as helpers to a relative, and obtain food, payment, and transport through this man.<sup>17</sup> If the helper decides to take up the occupation he will gradually accumulate his own hives and may consider the Cooperative to offer a way forward in life. However many men wait to inherit the TBCS membership together with the beehives from their relatives, and for official purposes remain as 'helpers'. For every noted TBCS member

in a camp there may be 1-3 other beekeeper-"helpers" who obtain transport and sales.

Geographically, 77% of TBCS members are from Tabora Region, most of whom are concentrated in Tabora and Urambo Districts (the south), 11% are from Rukwa Region, 10% from Shinyanga, and 2% from Mbeya.<sup>18</sup> Clearly the influence of the TBCS is most pervasive near the main honey plant as opposed to its outlying branches, which correlates to the 60-80% of total produce collected from this area for 1990-1993. I would argue that these figures reflect three factors: first, approximately 129 beekeepers work in Ugalla Game Reserve south of Tabora, where membership of the TBCS is compulsory and to some extent checked.

Second, certain local branches have a disproportionate influence in the TBCS and consequently gain greater access to TBCS resources, obtaining transport and payments most rapidly. This creates resentment and acts as a deterrent to beekeepers elsewhere. Also, where local branches are powerful, the authority structure of the TBCS is closely linked to authority within and between beekeeping camps, with the implication that successful beekeeping is associated with

Cooperative membership, in effect attracting members.

Third, in areas where there are large independent markets for honey and beeswax few beekeepers see reason to join the TBCS. Alternative market opportunities are associated not simply with demand but also with the availability of transport both for beekeepers and buyers. There may be a high demand for honey to make beer with or to use as sugar in the local towns but it must first be transported from the forest, which may be two hundred kilometres away, and even when it reaches a beekeeper's village this may be far from the town. In camps along the Central or Mpanda railway lines of the region the number of TBCS members are few, and even for members little produce is sold to the Cooperative because local entrepreneurs arrive on the train to buy honey and it is also sold up and down the line in half litre gin bottles (usually mixed with water). At the village of Ugalla River Station, for example, buckets of honey are lined up for buyers on the train. The implications of these market opportunities for the cooperative became apparent when the Chairman of this branch was thrown out of the AGM in 1994 due to lack of produce sales by his

members.

A fourth important aside should be made. Because the TBCS ensures members, and even non-members, a market the Cooperative becomes crucial to beekeepers in good years when there is a glut of honey on other local markets. Years that are considered 'good' are perhaps two in every five years (Ntenga, pers. comm.). The empirical material used here is limited in this regard, in particular because it is the result of data gathering in two consecutively poor years - 1993 and 1994 in the south of Tabora Region.

### **Beekeeping as a Source of Household Income**

Beekeeping is carried out during the dry season (May to November) by men who, in the majority of cases interviewed, are small-holder farmers producing subsistence food and a surplus for local sales when possible.<sup>19</sup> Both beekeeping and farming are prey to the vagaries of the weather. A long dry season, irregular rainfall, poor soil fertility, and the basic agricultural technologies that are used make occupational diversification a necessity. Within a household several

income generating activities are carried out on the basis of gender, age, and annual cycle. Although the centrality of particular activities will differ, diversification is not confined to households of low socio-economic status.

The importance of beekeeping as a source of income for individuals or a household varies greatly according to how committed a man is to the occupation, his health, the length of time he has been keeping bees, and the labor and resources he can draw on. For example, in 1992 the head of one beekeeping camp made TShs.96,750 from sales to the TBCS alone, his young son, in contrast, made TShs. 22,500 (In 1992 the Government minimum wage was T.Shs. 5,700 per month.). To generalize, for TBCS members it is likely to be the most substantial cash-income generating activity a farmer-beekeeper engages in.

For women (and a few men) honey provides income generating opportunities through brewing 'wanzuki', a honey beer that is made widely in beekeeping areas of East and Central Africa. In an area where there are cultural and other constraints on the work women can carry out, beer brewing (beer made from maize and/or honey<sup>20</sup>) is a vital source of income for

female headed households. Although my information is limited, it appears that by virtue of the fact that beekeepers do not generally reside in these households the women must pay to obtain the honey. It was surprisingly rare to find honey made directly into beer by women within the household of the beekeeper. In many cases this was because, after marriage, they were prevented from brewing for money, a practice linked to the fact that brewing was held in some contexts to be an occupation without respect. Likewise within the household women may have little control over the income from beekeeping, as appeared to be the case in the examples below (this was very difficult to assess).

### **The Consumption and Sale of Honey and Wax: Illustrations from Tabora**

**Focusing on TBCS members:** it can readily be demonstrated that only a portion of a members' produce is sold to the TBCS. Following harvesting, honey and beeswax become sub-divided several times through being shared and eaten in the forest, and given or sold to different people within contexts in which there are

only very precarious market opportunities. This is clearly part of the beekeeper and his family's different strategies in terms of their livelihood, social obligations, personal life projects, and the particular choices of the individuals concerned. In sum, honey and beeswax can be used to fulfill a number of very different ends. A person's role as a member of the TBCS, and the benefits and obligations this confers, becomes woven into these extrinsic aims. In order to try to understand the role and importance of the cooperative for members, and by implication the role of fair trade, I wish to focus on beekeepers' strategies in relation to different options for the sales of produce, together with the significance that honey and beeswax hold for certain individuals.

Bees are kept in the miombo woodlands away from the villages. In the forest a group of beekeepers live together in a camp near a water source. Simple cylindrical hives of bark or log are placed in trees within a radius of two to four kilometers, these hives will readily be occupied by a swarm of a species of wild bee (*Apis mellifera adansonii*).<sup>21</sup> Successful beekeeping requires a degree of long-term thinking, investment, considerable

experiential knowledge of a given location, and some co-operation with others when living in the rough conditions of the forest. The beehives, and in effect the camp, are wealth which can be inherited and many camps that exist today originated in the 1930's, being by now third generation (see footnote 7).

I wish to consider in detail the division and disposal of produce by members of one beekeeping camp during 1993. The core group was composed of ten men spanning in age from 18 to 70 with a head beekeeper, Martin Steven (referred to in the example of 'smokeless honey'), in his mid-50's who is also the chairman of a local TBCS branch. All are related to one another and live in the same village 180 kilometres from the camp. Three non-related men accompanied them for labouring work. They went to the forest from the 4th of June until the 17th of July and the 16th of October until the 17th of November. I myself lived in the camp during the period in question. By virtue of the fact that I had a car, resources, and was a novelty I became instrumental to many of the movements, communications, and produce transactions which took place when the beekeepers wished to meet with one

another, obtain lifts, and as people in the town asked me to buy honey for them. In so doing, I in effect became part of the network of honey transactions for that time.

The total annual produce from this group was 1,764 kg of honey (excluding the amount eaten) and 94.9 kg of wax. After consumption, produce was sold or disposed of in eight different ways (as percentages of the total)\*:

<b>Honey:</b> gifts	2 %
TBCS	56 %
honey beer brewers	20.5%
independent non-local buyers	10 %
home consumption	1 %
honey-beer sold by the beekeeper's family	3 %
payments for harvesting labor	6 %
spillage	1.5%
<b>Wax:</b> TBCS	27.6%
Local Asians	72.4%

*\* Given that this data is from the camp of a committed TBCS branch Chairman, I regard the percentage of produce sold to the Cooperative as very high in relation to an average for the camps studied.*

Below I give illustrations of four different beekeepers from this camp and

highlight the processes through which produce was apportioned when the group returned to the village. But first, because it cannot be quantified and associated with different individuals, I wish to consider separately the initial stages of dividing the produce through consumption and sharing in the forest. The quantity of produce used at this stage is small, however it is highly revealing of the different values and relationships which come into play through honey and wax according to the locality.

### **Sustenance in the Forest: Grubs and Honey**

When out harvesting, the opportunity is taken for everyone to sit and share fresh honey and brood comb from whoever's hives are being cropped. This is the first and often only food consumed until the meal in the evening. The brood comb is considered a delicacy, pieces being broken off and dipped in honey, whilst the chewed wax is carefully kept and reincorporated with the main produce. In the camp honey is eaten on its own especially when food supplies diminish, and with ugali (maize meal) when the

camp runs out of relish, or made into honey-beer. The act of consuming the brood comb should be emphasized: grubs and honey are obviously nutritious and good to eat, but this food, or 'meat' (Fiddes, 1993, p.67), is also highly symbolic of men's identity with the forest, honey-hunting, and beekeeping.<sup>22</sup>

Very sweet honey porridge is made for beekeepers who visit the camp and, in contrast, grudgingly given to fishermen who come to demand it. Other (rare) visitors who pass the camp are readily offered honey to eat or take away. It is interesting to contrast the case of honey given to other beekeepers as opposed to fishermen. Although it is highly impolite to refuse food the men in the camp would get greatly annoyed with the fishermen and liken it to begging, pointing out that between the beekeepers there was a common interest over many years whereby people would help each other when hungry or sick (both are ever present possibilities), whereas the fishermen were said to be opportunistic with no cooperation (ushirika), who would not give help if it was needed.

Clearly in this context the direct consumption value of honey is high, and honey, like other food, is shared with

others within or between beekeeping camps. Wax is carefully set aside to be purified and sold in town. In the process of sharing (or in the case of fishermen with-holding) the honey, wider social relationships become highlighted.

### **Strategies Involving Sales of Produce**

These four illustrations are taken from the thirteen men in the camp during 1993. Women hardly enter the picture because most of the conversations took place in the forest which was an exclusively male preserve. Inevitably, spending time with their families revealed other perspectives, in many cases how distant their wives or partners were from control over the income from beekeeping. This is admittedly a superficial judgement, because I did not carry out detailed research. The produce collected is representative of production in a year considered to be extremely poor in this locality.

**Illustration One:** Richard Martin. Martin Steven, the head of the camp and chairman of the cooperative branch has two sons, Richard and John, both of whom went to the forest in 1993. The



youngest, Richard Martin, is in his mid-20's, unmarried and lives with his older brother and farms his parents land. When I first formally interviewed John he had said that Richard was afraid of bees as an explanation of why his brother was not a beekeeper. I asked Richard about this and his reply was that no he likes, he must keep bees because his brother, father, and grandfather do. But what about his music, I asked [he played in a band in Tabora town]. He replied that he was tired of music now..."you get old without money, I will keep bees because I haven't another path".

The following month when we were living in the forest I was out harvesting hives with Richard Martin, his cousin, Athinas George, and a distant relative, John Kayao. It was hot and we were tired, having been out all day. They had lit a fire underneath one of the hives and we were sitting eating some brood comb waiting for the bees to calm down. Richard and Athinas started to argue, Richard complaining that the two others kept making a decision about which hives to inspect and then changing their minds. Athinas retorted "what are you doing"? [i.e. nothing] to which Richard replied "I'm only a guest/stranger here like sista"

[myself]. Athinas: "You just think of Europe and going in the aeroplane, myself I have a family" [his new wife was pregnant]. John came over "no honey" he shouted referring to another empty hive. I asked when the hive was made, the tree it was hung in, and when it was last harvested [variations on the theme of counting chickens]. Athinas replied "I remember well because I had just got married and I can recall saying 'next year I'll harvest' [but] this year is bad"...[he gave me the details of the various hives in the vicinity]...Richard "I was going to use the money [from the honey] for a business bringing [second-hand] clothes from Arusha". John: "and money" [i.e. how much]? Richard: "Shs.40,000 would be a good amount" but now, he explained, he could not do this and would have to work hard farming. Athinas: "You should start groundnuts" groundnuts are better than clothes. No, stated Richard that would take fertilizer and he could not afford it.

For Richard beekeeping represents a family tradition that he did not want to enter and a skill he was being pressurized to take up 'as a good son'. His brother explained these difficulties in terms of his fear of bees and on several occasions tried to co-opt me into making him see

[apparent] reason. In an earlier conversation Richard had explained how his father had refused to pay for his secondary education in order that he should do this manual labour (*kazi ya mikono*) because he would not be able to help himself with books. As he himself recognised beekeeping could give him good money with which to invest in new projects, like second-hand clothes, or as Athinas pointed out, growing groundnuts for sale in town.

As I saw it, Richard's wish to experience a wider world versus what others around him considered to be the 'real options' was particularly strong, however this situation highlighted something I encountered in regard to several other young men, namely that they did not want to continue to go to the forest although a key means of learning a skill was through family experience and, especially in the case of very good beekeepers of high local repute, there was a strong expectation that they would inherit the hives (implicitly the skills and right). By implication this would provide for the parents as the father grew too old. This was also coupled with the fact that opportunities in the forest - fishing, logging, beekeeping - were some of the most lucrative in that area open to a

man in Richard's position. In the event, in 1994 he had left for Dar Es Salaam in order to try to be a musician.

In July Richard Martin obtained 1.5 buckets of honey and 4 kg of wax through honey hunting and in November a further bucket and 3 kg of wax. After returning to the village in July he sold his wax for Tshs.4800 to an Asian in Tabora. The honey was made into honey beer that he sold by the cup to the young men who would congregate around his house to play cards and listen to music. He estimated the profit to be Tshs.18,000 but this line of business was also of high social importance for him. The money was spent on food and batteries for the radio which played incessantly when there was beer available.

In October, when we were in the forest, I sold a bucket of his honey to a professional hunter for the very high price of Tshs.7000. Richard Martin used some of this money to buy Tshs.5200 worth of fish on which he made an estimated profit of Tshs.5000 selling to people who came to his door in the village. He also sold the 3 kg's of wax to an Asian in town for Tshs. 3600. This produce was obtained through honey hunting rather than beekeeping (see footnote 21) which can be quite

lucrative but is short-term because he could have spent this time making beehives for the following year. He said that immediate income was far more important, although his lack of desire to keep bees played a part in this.

**Illustration Two:** Hamisi Kambalala is the cousin of Martin Steven, in his mid to late seventies, and turning both blind and senile. As a young man he had been brought up in the forest but for most of his life worked at the Mpanda mines. He is not a member of the TBCS and has only 80 beehives. He has no blood sons living nearby to help him but can depend on the young men of the camp who are all his kin and whom he refers to as his children.

One morning in the forest Mzee Hamisi and Nicolas George were inside the sleeping area huddled by the fire, the old man, Mzee Hamisi, had run out of paper for tobacco and was trying to scrounge some off Nicolas George: "aah mzee its special and ends like ugali [maize]", Nicolas replied. Mzee Hamisi: "I went to TMP [the printing press] before we came but they refused". Nicolas "you see now Mzee you'll have to stop" this was accompanied by peels of laughter because he had a really bad cough and they had kept telling him smoking was bad. I had

been listening [and writing this down] and went and asked to be welcomed then handed a newspaper to the old man; more laughter, this time at Nicolas George who had lost out. John Kayao said "the year before last he walked to the camp of Ligalla for tobacco". "What from here?" I said. "No, the camp of Ipalankwangu" and proceeded to imitate Mzee Hamisi's desperation for tobacco. This was some fifteen kilometers.

The old man had cut his leg badly and I was recovering from a fever so we were left in camp when the others went to re hang their hives. I put my tea on to boil, "chai mama, aah wazungu they like tea a lot...'chai boy!' [he imitated a European woman] they say before they wake up in the morning." After re bandaging his leg I sat probing about what he intended to do with the money from his honey "buy maize, mama, there is nothing else" and pointed out in no uncertain terms that this was more valuable than consuming the honey directly.

Mzee Hamisi was an old man who, as he revealed in the [too close for comfort] depiction of white people's tea drinking habits, had worked for Europeans all his life. Like many of his generation, beekeeping was a skill he had learnt as a

young man living in the forests to the south, which he saw as something to turn back to in his old age. As he described it to me, he saw "kumbe mali iko hapa!" [really there is wealth here]. I had naively thought that he kept returning to the forest despite being incapacitated because he did not want to admit he was old, but the young men pointed out that his children did not live with him and his family needed food, they said he had no choice. Although they teased him in a manner which was unthinkable with other older people, as family they in fact carried out most of the work for him (which they explicitly recognized). For Mzee Hamisi and his family beekeeping is essential in order to get by and assist in maintaining small habits like smoking.

On return to the village the 3 kilo's of wax was sold by his family to Asians for the low price of T.Shs. 3000 for medicine for his leg (having exhausted my medical kit). Being incapable of selling the 2 buckets of honey himself it went to the cooperative and brought in an income of TShs.10,000 in mid-August the money was immediately spent on maize to eat. In October he went to the forest but returned empty-handed.

**Illustration Three:** Nicolas George, is

Martin Steven's wife's half brother in other words 'shemeji' to Lucas Martin. He started to keep bees in 1984, has 156 beehives, and is a TBCS member.

One day I went to the parents of Martin Steven where I had arranged to interview Nicolas. He was with the elder son of Martin Steven, Abraham, and a friend, Charlie, repairing a bicycle. After greetings "this place is our garage today" he said laughing. Is it your bicycle? I asked. Mine, replied Abraham. Nicolas explained that they were repairing it so it could be sold in town and a new one bought together with money from some honey which had just been sold. I asked them why they did not put the money into a project (mradi) instead? "But the new bicycle will be really good"...Abraham turned to work on his bike again whilst Nicolas came to sit with me..."Will you see Simba?" I asked [A football team from Dar Es Salaam who were playing the local team, Mirambo; each evening my radio would be listened to for the football scores after which heated disputes inevitably followed]. The friend, Charlie [who was his beekeeping helper in the forest] butted in "I will go, I have to go to the football, always - its a must, as soon as I get money" [and laughingly indicated with his hand in the

direction of the football pitch in Tabora].

I followed up some questions from the forest and then asked: "what did you use the money from beekeeping for"? Last year he bought a bicycle and this year the radio. The week before I had been at his house where he had displayed the radio angling to get some batteries from me. He explained that every year he tries to buy things like a mattress, and he wants some tin for the roof and he must send some to his children [who lived with his parents, his wife having left him]. Why doesn't he have a savings account? No, it is better to buy things which last a long time because the prices keep going high and if there is a problem he can sell these things.

For Nicolas, like Abraham, beekeeping is a means to be able to buy items of status like a bicycle, radio and corrugated iron. Above I included the snippet of conversation about football because it seemed to underline something of these young men's priorities, dancing in the back street discos of Tabora was another. Beekeeping enables Nicolas and others to improve their lives in important ways, which means amongst other things placing these items, together with such activities as going to football matches and dancing, as necessities. I should point out

that these views were not necessarily shared by their partners, Charlie's wife was, at that time, heavily pregnant and worried about how they would get by with another child.

In terms of productivity, in July Nicolas obtained 9.5 buckets of honey and 11 kg of wax, his November produce was 1.5 buckets of honey and 3 kg of wax. 5 extra liters of honey were given to a hunting company for help with transport. He sold 5 buckets of honey and 3.5 kilos of wax to the TBCS for Tshs.25,000 and TShs.2275 respectively for which payments were made in August, and gave his beekeeping assistant one bucket. On return to the village he sold one bucket of honey for Tshs.5000 to an instructor at the Tabora Beekeeping Training institute, this was a low price which he accepted because he needed the cash and she manipulated her acquaintance with me. (She sold the honey to civil servants from Dar Es Salaam and Arusha for TShs.500 a half liter gin bottle.). At this time he also sold 8.5 kilos of wax to an Asian in Tabora for Tshs.9000.

He also withheld two buckets of honey until September when (being a bad year) the price was high, at which point he sold it to beer brewers in Tabora for

Tshs.14000. Saving produce for times of difficulty (more than waiting for an increase in price) is a common practice. In November he obtained a further 1.5 buckets of honey, one of which he sold to brewers for T.Shs. 7500 the other half he still had when interviewed. The 3 kilos of wax he obtained he sold to Asians in town for Tshs.3750.

**Illustration Four:** Martin Steven has kept bees since 1961, possesses 686 hives, and is chairman of a local branch of the TBCS. One evening I was sitting with Martin Steven's wife when a young man came to the house and went over to the chairman. After prolonged greetings he sat in silence. The chairman knew full well what he had come to say having already mentioned it to me. He prompted the young man and asked if there was anything that he could be helped with. The young man came out with the fact that the people of Malongwe camp along the railway line had sold nine buckets of honey outside the TBCS (which is against the regulations) in order, he said, to pay the fare back to town (one bucket would have been enough). Martin Steven was very straight forward saying look these are the rules, and we as a group have agreed to stick by them and therefore have an

obligation to sell produce. He ended by pointing out that the less honey people sold to the TBCS the more problems they would have receiving payments. Later there was a meeting at the factory from which I was excluded but I heard that they had decided to wait until the leader of the Malongwe beekeepers came back to the village. In principle it was agreed that they should pay back the money. I later asked the head beekeeper concerned and his only response was that the chairman was all words and no action.

In fact this scenario points at some factionalism between two different areas with considerable jealousy that the chairman could always rapidly obtain transport together with large numbers of containers for his family and the other camps to which they were linked. Beekeeping is a means for him to get on in life achieving a degree of power within the TBCS and local community, and in so doing it is a means to assist his kin and those connected to him. His role as an agent of the TBCS was made clear on many occasions in on-going saga's of trying to get people to sell their produce, or arbitrating disputes.

In 1993 he obtained 20.5 buckets of honey and 36.5 kilos of wax. He employed

two young men to harvest paying one and two buckets of honey commensurate with their labor. Harvesting labor is always calculated as a varying percentage of the produce. Another young man was employed to make 26 hives and paid the standard rate of Tshs.300 per log hive, equivalent to a days labor.

Martin Steven sold 20 buckets of honey to the TBCS for TShs.100,000 (including his helpers' honey) and presented me with half a bucket. The high percentage of honey sold to the cooperative was in keeping with his increasingly powerful role in the TBCS leadership. Interestingly this public face was not maintained in relation to the sale of wax. He carefully concealed from me that he only sold half his wax to the TBCS, 14.5 kilos for T.Shs. 9,425, and the remainder to Asians, I estimate for TShs.16,800.

The sale of wax provided money to help his wife who had malaria, whilst the TBCS payment was made a month later. They did not have an immediate need for food having obtained an adequate harvest. Fertilizer and small household items like cooking oil, salt, and snuff were bought and the rest of the money saved to pay for household necessities together with labor for the following agricultural season. The

previous year he had purchased six sheets of corrugated iron for his roof and was hoping to buy more but failed. He also advised his son, whom he had been pressurizing to get married, to wait because of the cost.

### **The Role Of The Branch Chairman In Maintaining 'Nusu-Nusu'**

A vital question, when considering the importance of the fair trade export market for beekeepers, is where does the Cooperative fit into the strategies of the beekeeper members? According to the discussion so far the Cooperative is obviously one option for sales. Beekeepers typically characterize the proportion of produce sold to the TBCS as being 'nusu-nusu' (half-half) in keeping, on the one hand with their membership obligation, and on the other with their need for money together with the wider opportunities (or lack of) which are open at the time.

Increased entrepreneurial activity has meant that alternative markets for produce have grown up, or certainly been extended, since the early 1980's. I would argue that the quantity of produce which

a beekeeper sells to the TBCS depends, firstly, on what the TBCS in practice offers him in return for his membership share above other market options. Second, the role the person occupies in the Cooperative and the value he places on the status this may confer. Third, critically, on how actively a beekeeper is pressurized to sell his produce to the Cooperative together with the ability and room for manoeuvre he has to negotiate this. Many beekeepers are happy to take the benefits the TBCS may offer (transport, containers, and a guaranteed market) without actively fulfilling their side of the obligation to sell the major quantity of produce to the Cooperative. In this respect the branch chairman or the agent (who's main role is to obtain TBCS money and pay the beekeepers for their produce) plays a key role in ensuring that beekeepers maintain their strategy of 'nusu-nusu'. Or indeed on the other hand, in facilitating the beekeeper to ignore the claims of the TBCS.

The branch Chairman, together with the agent, is formally responsible for distributing TBCS containers, arranging transport, ensuring members sell produce to the TBCS, and obtaining members payments. The timing of each of these

things is crucial, beekeepers want to enter the forest early and leave before they run out of food and tobacco. Against this is the fact that some 36 local branches are competing for the TBCS's limited resources. The influence of the different ATO's does not appear to be changing this, if anything it is exacerbated. The ability of a branch to obtain resources depends very much on the standing of the branch chairman within the TBCS - an issue which is unfortunately too complex to discuss here. It is also set against a constant process of decision making and re negotiation (both in the village and forest); difficulties in communication, obtaining money for diesel, fixing the lorries, and getting credit from the bank mean that there is a large gap between decisions which are agreed on between members and what takes place in practice.

When in the forest the chairman (or a representative) will note the produce of individual members. What is critical, however, is not that he necessarily prevents them from selling independently rather that they negotiate the sales of large quantities of honey with him. Wax is not taken into account. In effect sales have to have his approval and he may prevent them. Disputes arise if someone



sells honey without the knowledge of the chairman. Anecdotally, this was clearly highlighted in one village when I tried to buy a drum of honey. I spent hours waiting for the chairman to come with the key to the room despite the fact that the door was unlocked, eventually I had to leave empty-handed.

The chairman's role can be subject to intense tensions and factionalism. At times there was considerable resentment generated against the TBCS chairman in the area I stayed. Perhaps it is not coincidental that both his sons have recently suffered from witchcraft-related illnesses. A contrasting situation also seems to take place where there is a substantial independent market for honey, for example along the line of rail. In these places the allegiance of the chairman to the TBCS, and his power over branch members appears to be almost negligible. The TBCS branch Chairman has a degree of power over members sales where they depend on the Cooperative in the long-term; in such areas the TBCS, through the mediation of the branch chairman, will play an active role in members' strategies.

## **The Sales and Value of Produce Considered**

The illustrations above reveal that beekeeping and its produce, honey and beeswax, hold different values for different people and can be used to achieve various ends. The practice of beekeeping, and subsequent manipulation of sales of produce between different markets, including the fair trade market, is a means to enable people to fulfill different life projects. For Richard Steven beekeeping was a part of family tradition, something he did not want to do but at the same time a viable option that could be used to start other projects more in keeping with what he himself would have preferred. For Nicolas George honey and wax provided the means to buy status goods and modernize himself. Beekeeping was also something he could learn and be assisted in by virtue of the 'shemeji' relationship which Martin Steven held to him. For Mzee Hamisi Kambalala beekeeping was a means to support his family and himself, something he learned as a young man and a skill he could retire to and help prevent his family from sinking into extreme difficulties. For Steven Martin beekeeping and the income from his produce allowed

him to fulfill political ends via his role in the TBCS. Clearly produce is divided according to different criteria and through a range of transactions, time and place playing an important part in peoples' strategies.

In the forest large quantities of honey are eaten, shared, or offered as gifts. In a context where people rapidly fall short of food, regularly need to rely on the assistance of others, (and in this case my medicine and transport), and where money is temporarily of little use, the consumption and gift value of honey is prominent. Once taken to the village, maize and other items obtained through honey sales are more important for consumption. During 1993, women and children from the households of the beekeepers noted above didn't actually taste honey.

The strained honey is transported back to the village in drums and buckets on the TBCS truck (or on bicycles), whilst the wax will have been cleaned and set. On arrival at the cleaning plant produce not intended for TBCS sales rapidly disappears with the aid of family members, and the beekeeper obtains a receipt for the honey that remains. Wax may be sold to the Cooperative at a later date if desired. On

return to the village these men take the majority of their wax into town, and local markets for honey are also sought.

The period following the agricultural and honey harvests is eagerly anticipated as the time when the main annual cash expenditures are made; whether for food, material goods, health care, or debts and other expenses. Late payments made for produce reflects a widespread problem in relation to Tanzanian cooperatives. Many cannot obtain sufficient working capital to pay members on the spot. In the case of the TBCS, certainly at the time of research, producers could be flexible because there were other market opportunities.

In the past the TBCS is said to have held a certain monopoly over sales but this is no longer the case. There appears to be increased levels of entrepreneurial activity against which it must compete. This can be linked to a gradual decline in honey sales to the Cooperative since the early 1980's. Independent market opportunities do, however, vary according to location. I have distinguished between local village buyers - principally women who brew honey beer for sale (sometimes in bulk) - and independent Tanzanian entrepreneurs who take it to make beer in

the town, sell small quantities, or transport it to Arusha or Mwanza where the price may be three or four times as high. Asian and Arab traders have not as yet entered into the honey business on a significant scale because it requires processing, is difficult to transport, and the quality rapidly deteriorates with heat.

Price is highly variable according to whether there is a glut or dearth of honey. In this respect it was generally acknowledged that the price set by the TBCS served to maintain an average price outside the Cooperative. This is good for beekeepers, but rises in the price have a negative effect for the many brewers, mainly women, who depend on this activity as a source of income and usually have to buy the honey. The influence of the TBCS price on independent market prices in this area should be carefully taken into account in considerations of a fair price for honey.

In the above examples the honey sold outside the TBCS was all for a high price. Often, however, a price lower than the TBCS's will be accepted in order to gain money quickly. Honey sold to brewers is second grade, having been heated with a quantity of water. This is apparently preferred because otherwise the brewers

would have to go through the process themselves. In the case of second grade honey small portions can be deducted by the beekeeper for eating, to give to neighbours, or to sell. My data on this is limited because it was a poor year and all honey was rapidly sold in bulk. However, in one isolated village with which I am familiar honey was part of many small exchanges between neighbours. These transactions fulfil roles of support and obligation which are vital to people in such areas. Also, in contrast to the detailed examples given above, women appeared to play key roles in these transactions. The case of Nicolas George waiting for the price of honey to rise is interesting. Although more typically the act of storing produce is closer to the analogy of a savings account than beekeepers' actively manipulating the market.

A key point, however, is that village markets cannot accommodate the large quantities of honey that may be produced by a good beekeeper. This is particularly the case when the year is good for the bees because by implication their will rapidly be a glut of honey in rural areas. The importance of the TBCS or independent regional/national markets for serious

producers becomes obvious in this context. Honey will readily be sold to independent buyers where possible, although in this area it was a question of rare opportunity (in the cases above, I was key to each independent sale).

Wax is less versatile than honey. Discounting the minuscule quantities used as a sealant, it is solely intended for the export market. Asians and Arabs have been involved as middlemen in the wax trade since the German colonial era, hence their association with beekeepers has long historical roots. Along the roads in this region there are small trading posts where Asians and Arabs are occupied in the retail, timber, and transport trades. It is at these places that beeswax is sold, beekeepers either trade individually or village entrepreneurs may buy up quantities of beeswax for a small profit. Some Asians send trucks to the beekeeping camps in order to obtain large quantities of wax.

From 1985/86 some implications of changing national economic policies were felt in the TBCS. Following price deregulation, liberalization of beeswax exports, and the termination of the marketing corporation, GAPEX, the Asian and Arab communities of Tabora started

to act as middlemen (a role they had held in the past for the TBCS) for DSM Asian private companies exporting beeswax. They significantly, and increasingly, raised the price given to producers. For example, in 1985/86 the Tabora Regional Cooperative Union was offering Tshs.30 per kilo compared to approximately Tshs.120 per kilo from private entrepreneurs (Tabora Regional Beekeeping Office, unpublished figures). The price continued to escalate and in 1993 the TBCS offered Tshs.650 per kilo against the Asian's Tshs.1100-1250 per kilo. Directly attributable to this market is the dramatic decline in the quantities of beeswax sold to the TBCS, from 146 tonnes in 1980/1 to 2.5 tonnes in 1991/2. In 1994 the beekeepers elected to attempt to regain control of the beeswax market by raising the price and offering immediate cash (TBCS AGM minutes, 1994). How successful this will be remains to be seen.

The high price which is paid by Asian and Arab retailers for beeswax is interesting, given that these traders themselves are middlemen. An underlying reason appears to be that beeswax is a part, albeit minor, of the expanding trade in natural resources (non-traditional

exports) that is taking place in Tanzania at present (Chachage, 1993). Dar Es Salaam beeswax is a noted world commodity. In the case of beeswax from Tabora this links to an expanding trade in the export of natural resources in association with the import of consumer goods which, according to popular discourse, is a niche market dominated by the ethnic minority Asians. Beeswax is also said, by members of the Asian community in Tabora, to be a good item for smuggling goods inside (minerals or drugs).<sup>23</sup> From the beekeepers' point of view the Asians/Arabs provide a relatively good market although, as the beekeepers themselves recognize in the long-term it may have detrimental consequences to individuals and the TBCS because the Asians do not give wider support to producers.

## CONCLUSIONS

The preceding discussion has tried to explore the significance of the fair trade market at the local level in Tanzania and in so doing to reveal aspects of the nature of fair trade. When Tabora honey is bought from alternative trade retail outlets

the consumer knows little or nothing of the specific life-history of the product. Instead, the history is glossed over and incorporated into understandings of global relations, justice, equity, and development. This enables people in the north to create and participate in alternative markets and give new meanings to consumption in a manner that is appropriate to people's changing lifestyles.

Moving to the producers end of the fair trade network: the concept of 'fair', which the product embodies for the consumer, is meaningless having been taken out of context. This does not, however, prevent producers participating in the fair trade market. Indeed the fact that beekeepers have an export market may in itself constitute 'fair'. Ultimately, it does not matter whether the trade is governed by notions of being 'alternative' or 'fair' for the consumer, it still enables producers to achieve various ends in life, and it may do so on terms potentially more favorable to themselves than other markets would allow.

It has been clearly shown that a commodity like honey can be a vehicle around which development may be constructed in new ways. Honey (and

wax) embodies a multiplicity of values and becomes a medium that allows diverse individual actors to perform different roles in the fair trade network. In the case of producers, they are able to pursue their own life projects due to these new patterns of consumption and meaning associations made in the north. But fair trade does not provide alternatives to the globalising tendencies of development and to modernization per se. In this respect it is a far less radical departure from aid and development than one could be led to believe by engagement in fair trade markets in a country such as Britain.

The discussion in this article has placed emphasis on the idea that abstract ideas of 'fair trade' are reconstructed in specific situations. The example of honey from Tabora has demonstrated that alternative trade is given a substance and uniqueness at the local level. Partly this arises out of the specific context of production. Also there are numerous interconnections between the ATO's, and a mediating organisation links the ATO's to the producers. This is further complicated by the fact that the fair trade market has been overlaid on previous responses to external interventions together with local forms of organisation.

Fair trade interventions do not take place in a vacuum, being, obviously, transformed in the local context.

The Tabora Beekeepers Cooperative Society, in particular, is instrumental in mediating, manipulating or rejecting the designs of the various ATOs. Thus fair trade becomes aligned with significant issues, knowledge, and practices at the local level. This may relate to older conflicts, for example access to, and distribution of, limited resources. New, unpredicted conflicts may also be created and the distribution of power influenced. Furthermore, it can be seen clearly that some issues of most significance to producers aren't part of the fair trade agenda.

I would argue that the TBCS continues to have relevance for producers despite the existence of other regional markets. The Cooperative offers an important means of support through access to international trade, honey containers, and perhaps most importantly, transport. The sense of collectivity that the organisation confers is appreciated by people who otherwise work in isolated conditions within the forest, and this has grown up in a manner that is in keeping with men's identity as beekeepers. Relationships within the

Cooperative are also entwined with other local power relations, certainly where the TBCS has most influence. People manipulate the Cooperative regulations to suit themselves but they would not like to see its downfall.

The role of the ATO's, notably Traidcraft, in securing the financial viability of the TBCS and consequently its continuing relevance for producers at present, should not be under-estimated. This is especially so within the present Tanzanian economic and political climate, although this dimension does not appear to be fully appreciated by the international buyers. The extent of the roles the ATOs play at the local level and how dependent the TBCS has become on the fair trade market is an open question. When the short-term commitments of the present fair trade organisations are over the implications of the favourable terms of the present trade are likely to become most apparent.

In finishing, it should be emphasized that fair trading is concerned with a wide range of primary and manufactured products from all over the world. Obviously a single case on one commodity cannot be representative of the many other unique situations that fair trade

goods are produced in. Furthermore, this account is based on experience of a limited geographical area and cultural and historical context. It is perhaps needless to add that it is also the result of what could be gleaned from two fieldwork expeditions covering a period of only eighteen months. However the account may nevertheless give some pointers to the complexities of this and similar situations that simplistic descriptions (notably on the part of some ATOs) have ignored. Lack of appreciation of the complexities can lead to results (or lack of results) very different to those desired on the part of the ATO's and their northern patrons and customers. This room to manoeuvre is not in itself, necessarily, a negative feature.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank David Wainwright for his time and enthusiastic discussions on bees, honey and fair trade, and John Fisher for assistance correcting the text.

<sup>2</sup> For example advocacy led to a resolution in the European Parliament on coffee consumption as a means of active support for small Third World producers and the introduction of that coffee within the European institutions...Resolves, following the example set by the Netherlands Parliament to make only Max Havelaar branded coffee available within its premises and calls on the institutions of the community to make similar decisions (Anon.d, OJC, 280, pp.33-34).

<sup>3</sup> The fact that Tropical Forest Products does not like to define itself as an ATO illustrates the difficulties of incorporating a variety of organisations under a single banner. Here it is considered to be an ATO because it deals with producers in a manner which could constitute 'fair', sells honey via fair trade channels, and is considered to be an ATO by other organisations.

<sup>4</sup> Appadurai, following Kopytoff, distinguishes an object such as a painting which has a unique cultural biography from a class of goods such as iron bars, or, in this case Tabora honey, which will have a social history. Here I am simply suggesting that the packaging on a fair trade product conveys the

notion that the particular item has a specific cultural biography.

<sup>5</sup> By quality referents, in this context, I imply those aspects of a particular item and its packaging which relate to the notions of global relations, development, justice, and equality that I referred to on page 2 together with ideas of accountability and advocacy.

<sup>6</sup> Although extremely interesting I do not discuss these older forms of association between beekeepers. In particular I am thinking of the specialised guilds, or secret societies, in this area, they are famous in association to certain snake, porcupine, hunting, and ivory hunting guilds (Cory, EAF.Mss.Cory.105). Certain aspects of these guilds do seem to have been incorporated into more recent forms of association. For example, the TBCS has roots in an association between fishermen along the Ugalla River. This was apparently similar in form to the secret societies although it was localized and appears to have begun only in the twentieth century.

<sup>7</sup> Traidcraft is actually two connected organisations: Traidcraft Exchange and Traidcraft Plc. Traidcraft Exchange is a Christian development organisation which aims to facilitate business enterprises towards equitable world trade, together with raising the awareness of people in the UK of the inequities of the international system of trade. Traidcraft Plc is an ATO which sells goods by catalogue and through voluntary retail outlets in Britain. Both organisations have been involved with the TBCS, although, in my understanding, Traidcraft Exchange is no longer assisting the Co-operative, whilst Traidcraft Plc has committed itself to substantial orders of honey for the next five years.

<sup>8</sup> Ngoma refers to singing, drumming, and

dancing but in this context also loosely means having a good time in the place which they recognized as their 'country'. The British colonial regime responded to a sleeping sickness epidemic in the area by resettling the population and allowing only men to return during the dry season to carry out fishing, hunting, and beekeeping or honey hunting activities. It was notably following this move that these activities did develop as specialist occupations.

9 Wax is a relatively long standing export commodity in Western Tanzania whereas most evidence suggests that the British colonial Beekeeping Division and TBCS played key roles in the expansion of the export market for honey. The accounts of European travelers give details of regional trade in both honey and beeswax before the German colonial era (1890+) and honey was a medium of exchange in tribute relations (Burton, 1859, pp.286-7; Cameron, 1875, p.145; Swann, 1882, p.212). Locally honey was used extensively as a sweetener, in beer, mixed with herbs as a medicine especially for burns, and an important food in times of famine, war, old age, and sickness. Beeswax, which had largely been thrown away, became utilised by missionaries in candles due to its symbolic associations with purity (Root, 1937; late 1870's+). Beeswax production was then promoted by the German authorities as a means of paying tax (1897+), and grew to be the third most significant export of German East Africa before the First World War. Much of this beeswax came from the Tabora, Ufipa, and Kahama areas.

10 I use the term 'farmers' in keeping with post-independence ideas of rural development and the role of peasant farmers within this. The fact that people do feel an autonomy in relation to beekeeping was very

explicitly expressed on many occasions.

11 GAPEX - the General Agricultural Product Exporters, and NOTCO - the National Overseas Trading Corporation.

12 Although the Tanzanian Government has not abandoned its commitment to its particular brand of 'African socialism' Traidcraft started to operate in Tanzania when moves were being made away from this form of national development.

13 This type of honey beer is very similar to British mead, indeed when the White Fathers were running the TBCS they were very renowned for their brewing activities, and apparently used to compete for the best brew with Ntenga of the Beekeeping Division (Ntenga, pers. comm.). They did not teach anyone how to brew their 'honey wine' but apparently many catholic women of the time started to emulate them and this has continued into the present. Honey is and was, of course, used in other traditional beers. For instance, historically, in the area of Ugalla they made a beer called 'kangara' from honey, sorghum, and fermented bullrush millet.

14 For the purposes of this paper I am taking 'the producers' as a collective group although in fact there is considerable factionalism between them.

15 To stop using smoke may appear simple to the reader but the beekeeper risks getting stung very badly, and a changing in practices related to the use of smoke has implications for how and where the hives are hung, together with the method that is used in harvesting.

16 Official statistics are highly inaccurate, not least because beekeeping officers rarely have the opportunity to visit the forest where beekeeping camps are located. There were

several thousand beekeepers operating in the region.

17 Very few women keep bees or go to the forest because there are strong cultural traditions, economic factors, and administrative practices that militate against it in this region. The Manager of Ugalla Game Reserve defended the exclusion of women on the grounds that "women are all hooligans, there is no police to control them". Perhaps he was implicitly referring to the common associations made between women in the bush, prostitution, and drunkenness due to their brewing activities. Colonial administrative rules on seasonal labour migration, i.e. not allowing women to go to the forest, perhaps, historically, have played a part in developing such perceptions.

18 These percentages are based on the membership lists of the co-operative. In some cases it was unclear whether names referred to past or present members.

19 Farmers with less than 5 cultivated hectares, in cases interviewed less than 2.5 hectares in total (Tanzanian Bureau of Statistics, 1992). The main export crop grown in the region is tobacco but tobacco farming is rare among beekeepers because the beekeeping and tobacco seasons conflict. In the late 1960's and early 1970's beekeepers were exempted from compulsory tobacco farming for this reason (Shorter, 1972, pp.46-55).

20 Both maize and honey beer were brewed in most villages I visited. In Itetemla where the TBCS honey plant is based it was only the women who brewed a beer known as 'common', a maize beer, that were organised into informal brewing and beer selling groups. Honey beer would also be sold but was more likely to be made when and where someone could afford to buy the honey. I am

not entirely sure why this was so.

21 should distinguish between honey hunting and beekeeping, both of which are carried out although honey hunting is in decline. Honey hunters obtain honey from bee colonies found in trees, usually through following the honey bird (Indicator indicator). Beekeeping, in contrast, depends on bees colonising the log or bark hives of a beekeeper, which is a very different type of activity from honey hunting.

22 Interestingly, this act of consumption gets to the heart of the failure of successive generations of beekeeping extension work to introduce apparently modern, 'superior' beekeeping methods into the area. To crop all the comb in the hive and eat the brood is completely antithetical to the manner in which frame hive bee management is conceived, and indeed to the idea of bee-'keeping' in itself.

23 Slim evidence of the connection between beeswax and drugs comes from a Radio Humberside report of 5.9.94. Heroin, reported to have come from India via Dar Es Salaam, was found encased in beeswax on the east coast of Britain.