



# SABIO

South African Bee Industry Organisation

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## REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN SOUTH AFRICAN BEE INDUSTRY ORGANIZATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 22<sup>nd</sup> JULY 2017

1. Thank you to everyone who was able to attend today's proceedings at Elsenburg, outside Stellenbosch for what we have termed a Mini-Beecon organized by SABIO and also for attending our Annual General Meeting. I am always mindful of the fact that AGMs in any organization are considered boring events, required only in terms of the organization's constitution, but I would like to see this as an opportunity to report back to the South African Beekeeping community what are the key issues facing our industry and what lies ahead. We have broken with tradition this year in arranging a one-day, or rather a mornings-only Beecon to be held in Stellenbosch rather than the two day event with field trips and gala dinners, a number of speakers and a razz-a-ma-tazz awards event, but for good reason as decided by the Board in April this year. Following a very successful Beecon hosted by Western Cape last year no other Association came forward this year to host the event. As it fell into the hands of SABIO to organize BEECON 2017 and given our limited manpower resources at Board level, we felt that a smaller event, and possibly one to be held biennially would be more resourceful. The costs for delegates to attend annual conferences with travel and accommodation expenses has become a burden to beekeepers. Thus we thought we would take a chance this year and run the annual event for free. SABIO will be open for suggestions in future years from Associations interested in hosting our annual conference for their own benefits.
2. It has been a busy year for the Bee Industry, and especially SABIO, and I often wonder how much does the general beekeeper in this country know what actually is going on in the industry.

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### Board Members

CR Campbell, ME Miles (Chairman), S. Muller, CW Salmon, DF Vorster, P Walker, JJ Wolfaardt

3. With respect to our industry body, SABIO, we have managed to centralize and streamline our administrative operations into a tight knit functional unit comprising myself and Amanda and Andrea from the Douglas Bee Farms administrative unit. Amanda handles all our administrative queries and Andrea runs the accounting side. Thank you to these two ladies for all their help. Other than the small fee paid over to Douglas Bee Farms for this administrative service, all other administrative work is carried out voluntarily by the Board Members of SABIO.
  
4. Our financial affairs are now being well monitored and up to date and thanks to the expediency of our new Accountants and auditing firm we are able to present audited financial accounts timeously to our annual general meeting.
  
5. The membership figures in SABIO still remain a challenge in my opinion. Currently, as of this week we have **210 Primary Members**, (or ordinary beekeepers) which is now less than the figure at the last AGM. We have **three companies** which have joined as **Corporate Members**. Out of the ten listed **Beekeeping Associations** which we promote in the SA Bee Journal, most of which are functional, once again this year only **three**, Western Cape Beekeepers Association, the KZN Bee Farmers Association and Northern's Beekeeping Association have renewed their annual affiliations. During the course of this year there has been some interest from active beekeepers in the Nelspruit and Port Elizabeth areas to revive the activities of a local beekeeping association, which is encouraging. But I continue to remain perplexed as to why there is no other interest and support from the other active Associations to affiliate to SABIO and to contribute to and support industry issues. On a personal note I must say that I am even more distressed by the fact that my own Association to which I have been a member for some 17 years, and which had always been a staunch supporter of the National Body, has chosen not to affiliate to SABIO for the past two years. I invite Association Representatives to discuss this issue with the SABIO Board.
  
6. I believe that increasing the support and membership of SABIO must become one of the key issues which the national body must address in the coming years. No-one knows exactly how many beekeepers there are in this country. Even if the guesstimate is in the region of 2500 persons, (my thumbsuck!) why is it that we cannot

secure at least 40% of that figure? I do not believe that financial constraints on beekeepers, which is always the first excuse which comes to mind is the real reason. This concern to me was brought sharply into focus following the devastating fires which destroyed large parts of the Knysna and Thornhill regions recently and the pleas for help from beekeepers which followed. I thought to myself one evening during this event that if SABIO had a steady annual membership figure of 1000 beekeepers, paying the membership fees of plus/minus R400 per year, how beneficial could that have been given the surpluses which could have been generated to set up Disaster Relief Funds, for instance, to help those in times of need like this. The irony is that many of those needing help were neither SABIO members nor registered beekeepers. I can only put it down to a lack of interest, an apathy amongst many beekeepers why they do not see it in their own interests and that of the industry to support the national body. This is something that we will need to deal with through a public relations campaign in the years to come because I do believe, if you were to take into perspective what SABIO is currently doing for the industry and can do that the dissolution of the industry body will be of no benefit to the role-players in the beekeeping industry. It seems like this is a recurring theme in every annual Chairman's address!!

7. We were also furnished with the registration figures for beekeepers by DAFF which in April 2017 look as follows. No doubt that they have changed slightly in the past three months.

<b>Total beekeepers on the DAFF records:</b>			
<b>Province</b>	<b>Beekeepers on record</b>	<b>Managed colonies</b>	<b>Registered 2017</b>
<b>Eastern Cape</b>	100	5674	19
<b>Free State</b>	51	2966	15
<b>Gauteng</b>	382	18864	198
<b>Kwa-Zulu Natal</b>	111	9587	30
<b>Limpopop</b>	250	4086	190
<b>Mpumalanga</b>	102	5200	28
<b>Northern Cape</b>	23	3534	5
<b>North West</b>	54	1356	21
<b>Western Cape</b>	755	69205	252
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1828</b>	<b>120472</b>	<b>758</b>
<b>Other Beekeepers with hives all over</b>		17400	
		<b>137872</b>	

8. **Meetings with DAFF.** Only one meeting was held with DAFF during the past year on the 14<sup>th</sup> March 2017. It was a constructive meeting and a number of issues were discussed. The key issues included:

**The status of AFB in the country:** It appears there remain traces of AFB symptoms throughout the Western Cape region although it is becoming more and more difficult to detect. No clinical symptoms of AFB have been detected outside of this province for a number of years. Some positive laboratory results were found emanating from the KZN, Free State, Limpopo, Gauteng and Mpumalanga provinces during routine surveillances but no clinical symptoms of the disease accompanied these tests. The colonies checked remained healthy following the tests. In the Northern and North Western Cape regions some colonies showed clinical signs of infestation but the laboratory tests proved negative. It is more likely they were suffering another viral infection such as sac brood disease. The government has undertaken to continue surveying the country for future outbreaks of the brood disease.

**Challenges facing the Department with regards the registration of beekeepers:** The department was facing some problems regarding their centralized data capturing system but this has slowly been sorted out. Not all beekeepers have access to electronic mailing and beekeepers have given up on the department given the lack of response when applying previously. DAFF has undertaken to address these administrative problems. DAFF has indicated that the enforcement of the law must commence shortly in respect of those beekeepers not complying with the obligations of annual registration. It was also suggested that crop growers should only make use of pollination service providers who are registered beekeepers.

**Animal Health Involvement:** Beekeeping in South Africa falls under the Directorate: Plant Health and there is no involvement in our industry by the Directorate: Animal Health. This is hopefully being rectified and representatives from Animal Health are now attending our meetings with DAFF. Internationally the regulation of bee diseases and the import and export of bee products falls under Animal Health.

**The sale of Adulterated Honey on the SA Market:** This issue was addressed at length. Adulterated honeys reach our market in three different ways. There is laboratory manufactured honey artificially made with the addition of sugars and syrups and sold as pure honey. Imported honey is brought in as “syrup” to avoid paying import duties and irradiation costs and is sold cheaply on the SA market. Some honeys are imported from other African countries and then sold as South African Honey. This honey is not tested or irradiated. In addition another form of adulterated honey could be from over feeding of bees on sugar syrup resulting in bees producing surplus honey. At the moment there are no accredited laboratories in South Africa able to conduct the accurate testing of honey. DAFF is investigating the feasibility of utilizing overseas laboratories for this purpose and one commercial beekeeper has offered to assist financially with this process. SABIO Board members have met with Stellenbosch University researchers to ascertain the feasibility of using their laboratory for such testing but it appears the cost of the equipment is very high and the reliability of the results yet to be ascertained.

**Apicultural Advisory Council:** DAFF appears supportive of re-establishing an independent body to address all apicultural issues facing the country involving all stakeholders. Terms of Reference are to be drafted and SABIO has requested that this be given priority during 2017.

**The use of OTC (Oxytetracycline):** OTC is not registered for use on bees in South Africa. Because AFB is a notifiable disease in South Africa and it is a criminal offence to obscure signs of an outbreak of AFB with the use of antimicrobials DAFF will not condone the use of OTC on honeybees. It is their position that anyone found using the substance on their bees be penalized.

A number of other on-going issues continue to be addressed in these meetings and we will continue to request continued dialogue with government generally and in particular the Department of Agriculture with whom we have a good working relationship.

9. SABIO has also been involved in a number of other projects and campaigns during the 2016-2017 period for the Bee Industry.

10. **The South African Bee Journal.** The new-look SABJ was launched with the August edition last year with a follow up in March 2017. I would like to thank Don Marshall, our new Editor for the time and enthusiasm he has put into making the Journal a more professional and quality publication, not only for the local industry but on a par with other international publications in apiculture. The next edition for 2017 is due out shortly and we hope that we will be able to fulfill our mandate of 4 publications a year. But we have major challenges in producing the quality journal. It is a time consuming task for a small editorial team to put together a quality magazine voluntarily. Finding articles to publish from amongst our own South African readership is often a tortuous task. But as the interest grows hopefully our contributions will be more informative, scientific, and authentic South African apicultural articles. However our main dilemma at this stage is the distribution network. The cost of producing each edition is high. Many beekeepers like a hard copy and traditionally the journal has only been in magazine format. Suggestions were made to distribute an electronic copy which we have now done by posting the journal on the SABIO website for all to see. However this has been a promotional decision. We cannot continue to disseminate the journal freely to anybody who is not a paid up member of SABIO. Suggestions have been made that we should consider a subscription fee for the journal but then why should non-SABIO members receive the journal for a lesser contribution. We are steadily increasing the advertising contributions to the journal to offset against the costs of producing minimal quantities but at the end of the day the principle remains that the SABJ is the mouthpiece of the Industry body and that only persons who are SABIO members should receive it. Anybody who believes that he should receive a free or price reduced copy does not have the interests of the industry at heart. We need to

grow the readership levels to make this publication viable and although this will take time it is a goal which we should achieve.

11. A major achievement by SABIO this year has been the national launch of the **Pollination Services Charter** in conjunction with the Crop Growers and the Crop Protection Industry represented by Croplife. To this extent we need to extend special thanks to Dirk Uys of Bayer and representing Croplife for the enthusiasm and effort he has put into making this a reality. Two consultative meetings were held during the year to consult with bee farmers on the feasibility and practical issues of implementing such a Charter which is really a Statement of Intent or a Mission Statement which the three players in the pollination industry can adhere to, to improve communications and standards on pesticide usage in the field. Interestingly at the one meeting the participants appeared more to want to focus on attacking the facilitator rather than addressing the issues at stake and at the other participants focused on attacking government for doing nothing to help the bee industry. However the forums produced good feedback on how beekeepers felt about this issue (and about SABIO) and enough information to formulate sound principles on pesticide usage during pollination seasons was achieved. The Charter is attracting more and more interest from all players in the industry and also certainly from the media.

12. Probably one of the more sensitive issues to face our industry nationally this year was the announcement during March 2017 of the Department's appointment of **Assignees** in terms of the **Agricultural Products Standards Act** to carry out Inspections and Audits on various agricultural products, which includes honey sold in the retail sector. Inspectors are authorized to enter premises where listed agricultural goods are sold to carry out inspections and remove products for analysis at laboratories for testing. Fees will be charged by these Assignees and billed to the "owner" of the product, which in the case of honey for instance will be the shop owner who has already purchased the consignment from the beekeeper. This has led to the real concern that retailers will not want to stock beekeepers' honey unless the beekeeper stands surety for the exorbitant proposed fee structure. The Assignee appointed for honey products is a company based in Nelspruit and rumour has it that fees charged will be "very high". Unfortunately at the most recent consultative meeting on this issue held in Johannesburg I was unable to attend due to other business commitments but SABIO

has indicated quite clearly its interest in responding to these new regulations. The fact is that they are here to stay and will be implemented but we need to ensure that such implementation is mindful of the fragility of our honey production industry and that we secure the best possible outcome for our commercial sector. The irony is that there appears to be still no accredited laboratory in this country which can carry out the prescribed tests on honey products.

13. SABIO has also recently become directly involved in addressing the restrictions placed on exporters of honey products to the European Union in January this year. Because South Africa has no **Residue Monitoring Programme** in place for honey products whereby the veterinary department can validate the disease free standards of products of goods to be imported into the EU we are no longer able to export honey to this valuable market. SABIO has recently been in talks with players in the market and the Veterinary Department to establish a Residue Monitoring Programme for honey products. Progress appears positive. Our objective is to expose some of our unique honeys such as Fynbos, Boekenhout, Swarthaak and other indigenous flora honeys to the European markets. Minimum bulk prices of such honeys, I am told, reach R120/kilo, if not more.

14. On the international front SABIO has commenced talks with local agencies on bringing **Apimondia** to South Africa in **2023**. We already have moral and financial support from Tourism South Africa who approached us earlier on this year. We are also in talks with government to support us in this initiative especially on the financial side of firstly making a bid for the conference and secondly, if successful, running the conference. Hosting such a conference will have huge spinoffs not only for our local industry but for the country as a whole. Returns on investment in this project show that it could generate anything from R100 to R200 million for the five day event alone. We have noted that SA-Rugby are also bidding to hold the World Cup in 2023 which makes our bid incredibly viable. Every New Zealand beekeeper will want to attend our Apimondia 2023 followed by the opening of the World Cup Rugby tournament hopefully once again in the Cape Town stadium.

15. Another area of concern nationally has been the growing small industry of **Bee Removal Service Providers** who have sprung up in various urban environments.

Often these service providers have no training in beekeeping, operate out of a bakkie and give our industry a bad name when all hell breaks loose and people and animals get stung and even killed. SABIO is investigating the feasibility of registering these service providers as accredited bee removal specialists who can only operate with a licence, much the same as the pest control industry operates. We recently launched on our website a new feature for registered beekeepers nationally to be listed as “accredited” bee removal specialists. These persons should not only be registered with DAFF as a beekeeper but should also be members of SABIO and carry public liability insurance so that ultimately we can regulate more closely this service for the industry.

16. Another service which SABIO should be able to provide is **a national database of Pollination Service Providers** with contact details, regions in which they operate and crops which they may specialize in.
17. As briefly mentioned above the recent devastation in the Knysna and Thornhill areas following the fire storms which swept through vast tracts of suburbia, vegetation and farmlands should be a reminder to us all as to how fragile our industry really is. Our thoughts did go out to all those beekeepers affected. If SABIO was truly a national body representing every single beekeeper in the country we could have done a lot more for these persons than just feeling for their losses and their sufferings.
18. I would like to thank the rest of the Board Members for their contributions during the past year towards the successes of what SABIO has been able to achieve and also for their support towards myself as Chairman. Two Board members will be stepping down this year. I would like to thank Sandy Muller for her dedication and patience in addressing beekeeping issues in the Eastern Cape, especially around her home town of East London, and her tireless efforts to foster a collective interest by local hobby and commercial beekeepers in the region; alas but to no avail. Charles Salmon, from the Klein Karoo region is also stepping down as a Board Member but given his status in the Western Cape Provincial Department of Agriculture, with special emphasis on development beekeeping I have asked him to remain attached to our Board meetings and provide input on provincial issues, if he so wishes. Jaco Wolfaardt always adds positive inspiration to any dilemmas which we may face, inevitably with the offer of a good bottle of Cape wine to help lubricate the thought process. Craig Campbell and

Phil Walker from the last outpost province of Kwa-Zulu Natal never give up on proposing solutions and having a youthful Danie Vorster on the Board seriously impedes having a comfortable “old-school” approach to dealing with issues. In addition I must also thank Riaan van Zyl personally for his continued participation and contribution as a national DAFF representative in working with us on all beekeeping matters. We can never criticize government when he attends our Board meetings! The SABIO Board is not a one man band nor is it simply a seven or eight person group which runs or controls the national industry. We can only achieve the goals of the industry if we have the support of everybody, otherwise a National Organization serves no purpose.

Thank you!

**MIKE MILES**  
**Chairman: SABIO**  
**22<sup>nd</sup> July 2017**