

Fairtrade: a World of Difference

Producer Stories: Chino Henriques

Apicoop, Chile, Honey



Chino Henriques

"Honey has been transformed into money. We have all brand-new doors on the Apicoop premises, costing \$20,000. They help to keep out insects, particularly moths, which can damage the honeycomb when it is being stored. There is a new, two-year-old honey extractor, replacing the old machine we had for more than 20 years. It does 50% more in half the time.

"We hope to build a heating room. Most of the drums after May get crystallised and hard to blend. We liquefy the drums by putting them in water for 24 hours. It's on our wish list, modernizing the honey warmer.



"Until 2005, honey did not have Fairtrade premium money so all we did was with our own earnings. We pride ourselves that we were capable of earning and doing this with our own money."



"It is not only a bee project, it is an educational space for people. They commit to their own co-operative. All together we have a span of 1200 kms of beekeepers, north and south. We have 133 members but of them four are co-operatives themselves, so even although they have one vote in the system, they have other members so we have 300 to 400 people involved."

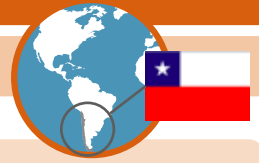
"We are the biggest beekeepers in the country, with over 40,000 hives."

Photos: Traidcraft/
Richard Else
Apicoop supplies honey
to Traidcraft. Information
taken from interviews
Sept 06-08.

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And now blueberries...

“Even before the blueberries were established in the common field, the co-op had already invested a lot of time and money in developing the project.

“[In 2005] we bought 21 hectares of land with a view to diversifying. This was rough ground when we bought it. We spent four months clearing the place. To break the bug cycles we’ve put wheat there. In March it will be cropped and then we will establish our blueberries.



“We really hope that we can create the same spirit of fair trade within the blueberry yard.”



“We established the well in June 2006. It is a beautiful quality of water. The quality of the water here is straight from Mother Earth. This is a huge investment. The field is clean and in winter-time, when all the bushes are established, it will be worth 10 times the price.

We’ve hired three people to put in the poles to support the mesh which will create light and shade and protect the plants from the sun.

“A portion of the Fairtrade premium money is being used to pay off the purchase of the land. We are going to divide it into three or four varieties of blueberries so that we will have early, middle and late crops so we keep the full season working. On average, we should have something like 15 persons working per hectare. Most of the workers will be women.”



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Producer Stories: Juan and Marina Inostroza

Apicoop, Chile, Honey



Juan and Marina Inostroza



The blueberry project has helped Apicoop beekeepers, Juan and Marina Inostroza, to develop their berry fruits business, as all the blueberry plants have been grown in their nurseries. In 2005 the couple had three polytunnels and employed five members of staff - now up to 15 people benefit from full-time work, caring for plants in 13 polytunnels. Now Juan and Marina are buying a neighbouring field to grow their own blueberry bushes.



Marina says: "It is very important that Apicoop decided to buy the plants from our nursery, because the money generated has been able to increase this family company. All we had this year for sale was bought by Apicoop. We have between 10 and 15 people working here full-time. They have a contract for the work. Now we have more greenhouses there is a much higher level of work by hand. The sprinklers in the greenhouses have very tiny drops. Too strong and the plant leaves might be damaged.

"We have [also] increased our bees. We have 500 now. At the end of the season we would like to have 800.

"I would be happy to see my children 100% developed and satisfied as people doing what they love the best, and if possible one of them continuing the sort of work that we have been doing on our farm but mainly it is up to them. For them to grow up healthy and happy."

"Our co-operative has become a cornerstone for us in beekeeping as well as blueberries. It has supported us growing and selling our products. From a social point of view, the co-op is something like close friends, it is almost like a family."



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Producer Stories: Jonathan and Richard

Apicoop, Chile, Honey



Jonathan and Richard Inostroza

Jonathan and Richard are following in their parents' footsteps by keeping bees. They received the hives as birthday gifts when they were 10 and enjoy looking after them. The twins attend Escuela Rural Choroico, which is within walking distance of their home. The school has 160 students from kindergarten up to 8th grade. Jonathan and Richard are in a class of 19 pupils.



"After I finish school I would also like to go to university and become as my father and even better." Richard

Jonathan says: "My father gave me the hives so I started doing beekeeping. You have to protect the bees from the cold and from hunger. We have to protect them also from the mites because there are some mites that kill them."

Richard says: "I also got the hives from my father so I could take care of them, feed them, protect them. You have to protect the bees against hunger and cold, and from mites and insects like the yellow wasp. You have to take care of them with kindness and you have to trust them."

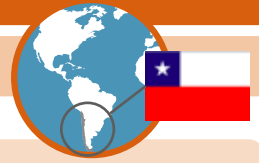
"When I finish school I would like to go to university and become an agronomist." Jonathan



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Producer Stories: Guido and Sonia

Apicoop, Chile, Honey



Guido Guenupan and Sonia Chicao



Guido and Sonia are beekeepers. The family lives in Caunahue, a small community near Paillaco, where Apicoop is based. Around 20 people keep bees locally – about 10 began in 2006 – and six of them are members of Apicoop. The couple bought a truck with a loan from Apicoop, even though neither of them drive.



Guido

“We are buying the pick-up but neither of us drive so we have paid for our son, Guido, to have driving lessons so he will be the driver for the family. It is very important to have transport. We have been moving our hives and bees with the oxen so we have to wait until afternoon or dark so we would not get stung by the bees.

“Our efficiency in beekeeping will no doubt increase once we have transport. Sometimes it has been raining here and the next day we found that our hives have swarmed and we lost 50%. Now we are going to be there every time when it is needed. We won’t be depending on anybody.

“The boys are wanting to start keeping bees because they have hardly any alternatives for work here and beekeeping has proved to be a good opportunity. Most of the youth are going to the big cities.

“Of the five children we have, the eldest, Anibal, is working in Santiago and we have a daughter, Daisy who is living here now, but her husband has found work in Santiago as well. Once they take off for the big city it is difficult for them to come back and get used to the style of life in the countryside. They just get back for holidays.

I have no doubt keeping bees was a good decision because now our main income is based on beekeeping. The bees look after us. We are depending almost 100% on the bees. If the season goes well, we are expecting to have five tons of honey.”

“Everything you see here has been earned by the bees. I used to be a seasonal worker in the woods but in the end I didn’t earn anything. With the beekeeping we have enough money to give our kids education.”



Fairtrade: a World of Difference

Producer Stories: Sonia

Apicoop, Chile, Honey



Sonia

"There were times when we would make an agreement to hire a person with a car to take us to our bees 8kms from here and the person used to forget about us, so we had to walk all the way home.

"Our son Rodrigo (26) has started working with us and he owns 20 hives. Two years ago I would have thought with 100 hives we would be well enough, but today we are working as a family and we have 100. We are now wondering if we can think of having 500 hives.



"We are very grateful for the opportunity that this fair trade market has given us and we would like to encourage people to continue. Every time they buy our honey it means a lot to us."

"I have got six hectares of flat land about 15kms from Paillaco. I wish to do something with this piece of land that would help it to increase our income - maybe blueberries?"



If Apicoop did not exist

"The best we could do would be to sell locally, but we would be able to sell only about one ton. There were times here when there were beekeepers but they all quit because there was no market. If there was no Apicoop to buy the honey, it would not make sense that we worked in this.

"Until a couple of years ago we were not very skilled in beekeeping techniques. This year, so far we have not lost a single bee hive and our hope is that it will continue this way - that we do not lose any bees and we can increase, because if the bees are healthy we will be as well."