An assessment of high quality honeys with a potential for Geographical Indication (GI) labeling and initiatives that add value to the honey sector in Kenya

Mary Warui[1], Mary Gikungu[2], Aske Bosselmann[3], Lise Hansted[4] and John Mburu[1]

[1]University of Nairobi, P.O. Box 30197-00100 Nairobi, Kenya.

[2]Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology P.O. Box 62,000 ï 00200 Nairobi, Kenya

[3]Department of Food & Resource Economics, University of Copenhagen, Rolighedsvej 25, 1985 Frederiksberg C, Denmark.

[4]Danish Beekeepers Association, Danish Beekeepers Association, Fuldbyvej 15, 4180 Sorø Denmark

Abstract

Kenya has unexploited potential for creating monetary value from original and unique honey. High quality and unique honeys can be labeled with Geographical Indication (GI). The study was a preliminary survey that aimed at; (i) assessing; honeys with a potential for GI labeling, perceptions on their reputation and quality; (ii) understanding the initiatives that add value to the local honey sector in Kenya. 20 honey consumers at the national level where different kinds of honeys are supplied were interviewed. Also, 40 honey consumers and 40 honey producers at the local level where honey is produced were interviewed. Results showed that honey quality is linked with the area where it is produced.

Key Words: Honey, Geographical Indications, Initiatives, Kenya

Introduction

Beekeeping in Kenya is an important agricultural activity which contributes to improved livelihoods and Gross Domestic Product. In Kenya, honey production contribute to about Kshs 4.3 billion estimated at 25,000 metric tonnes annually (GoK, 2008).

Geographical Indications (GIs) identify a product as originating from a territory, or a region or locality, where a given quality, reputation or other characteristics of the product are exclusively or essentially attributable to its geographical origin (Article 22, TRIPS definition).

According to Appiah (2011), the protection of products through GI is important. It increases producers´ premiums and enhances valorization. The European Union agricultural origin food and other products registered with óprotectedôGIs add 15 billion Euros per annum to European agriculture (EC, 2006). Oku white Honey in Cameroon which was registered as Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) in 2013 now employs about 3,200 people fetching between FCFA 30-40 million annually into the economy of the Sub-division (Bainkong, 2014). Africa, including Kenya, has a potential for exploiting markets for origin and unique products (AU & EC, 2011) for valorization of the products.

According to Aubard, 2010, products originating from a ´terroir´ or a specific territory are those that belong to a collective regional, national heritage. These products must be economically valued for the local producers but also for the territory in which they are located and from which they derive their qualities. GI thus is a collective right. A Kenya-Swiss project identified some honeys in Kenya as potential for GI registration (KIPI 2009).There is thus a need to identify the characteristics which make these honeys unique and their attribution.

The preliminary study therefore aimed at assessing honey consumers and producers perceptions on honey quality and characteristics which can qualify their registration as GIs. It also aimed at investigating the initiatives that add value to the local honey sector in Kenya.

Materials and Methods

Study Area

Following literature review and key informant interviews, the preliminary study was carried out in Baringo, West Pokot, Mwingi, Kibwezi, Isiolo, Laikipia, Arabuko Sokoke forest honey from Gede and Mangrove honey from Mida Creek, Kilifi. These areas are known for honey production in Kenya.

Data Collection

Since the study was a preliminary survey to guide the main study, a small number of respondents was selected. 20 honey consumers at the national level where different kinds of honeys are supplied were interviewed. The consumers selected were consumers who have used and are conversant with the different honey brands produced in different parts of Kenya. Also, 40 honey consumers and 40 honey producers at the local level where honey is produced were interviewed. In each study area (local level), 5 honey producers and 5 honey consumers were interviewed.

Other methods used in this study were direct observations, tasting of the honey, participation in honey producers meetings, and trainings. Relevant documents were also reviewed. Data collected included perceptions on the: reputation on different kinds of honey; factors affecting honey quality; parameters determining honey quality and kinds of initiatives that add value to the local honey sector in Kenya.

RESULTS

Consumer perceptions of honey reputation

All the respondents (100%) said Mwingi honey has a good reputation followed by Baringo honey (95%) then West Pokot honey (90%) and Arabuko Sokoke Forest honey (85%) (Figure 1). Honey consumers has trust in those honeys and do not ask for finer details when buying them. The honeys are known both locally and nationally and they are known because they are; original, pure, organic, good tasting/good flavour and have medicinal properties. Consumers associated those qualities of honey with their areas of production (origin).

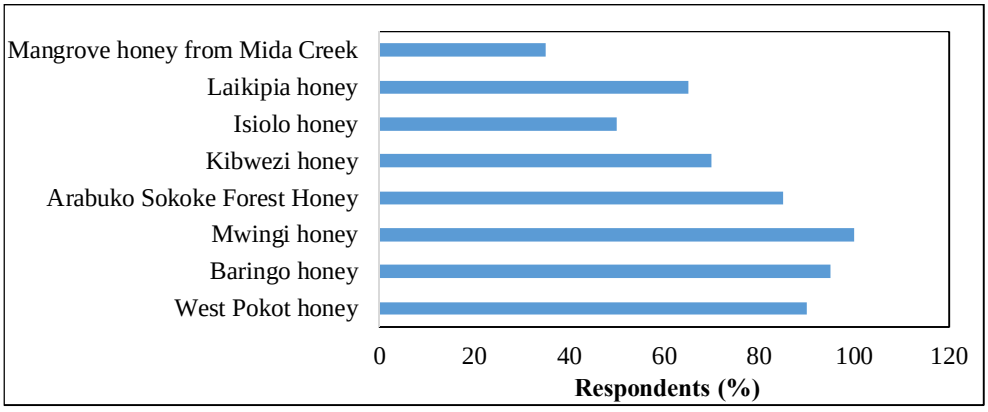


Figure 1: Reputation of honey from different geographical areas in Kenya

Producer and consumers perception on parameters determining honey quality

All the consumers (100%) perceived taste/flavor and viscosity to be the most important determinant of honey quality followed by texture (97.5%). All the producers (100%) perceived taste/flavor and to be the most important determinant of honey quality followed by viscosity

(95%) then appearance/colour (87.5%). Aroma/smell (35%) and physico-chemical properties (15%) were perceived to be the least important determinant of quality of honey by producers and consumers respectively (Figure 2).

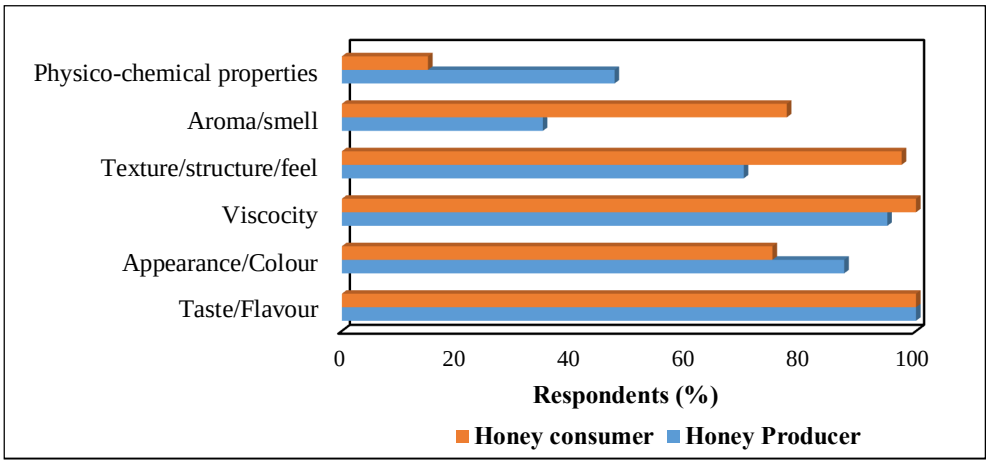


Figure 2: Parameters determining honey quality

Producer perception on factors affecting the quality of honey

All the honey producers (100%) perceived floral/nectar sources and honey processing methods (value addition-honey handling, storage, equipment and machineries used to strain, filter and decant) as the major factors that influence/affect the quality of honey. This was followed by the honey harvesting methods (use of good harvesting tools, proper smoking methods, proper honey handling, storing honey in clean, dry, plastic and food recommended buckets) at 95%. Beekeeping practices (general bee husbandry and management-types and number of bee hives used, positioning beehives, hive inspection, hive cleaning and practicing organic agriculture) was perceived as the least factor that affect honey quality (62.5%) (Figure 3).

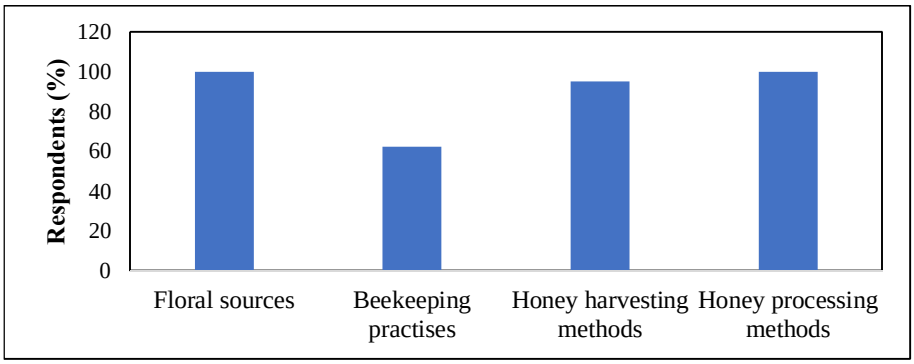


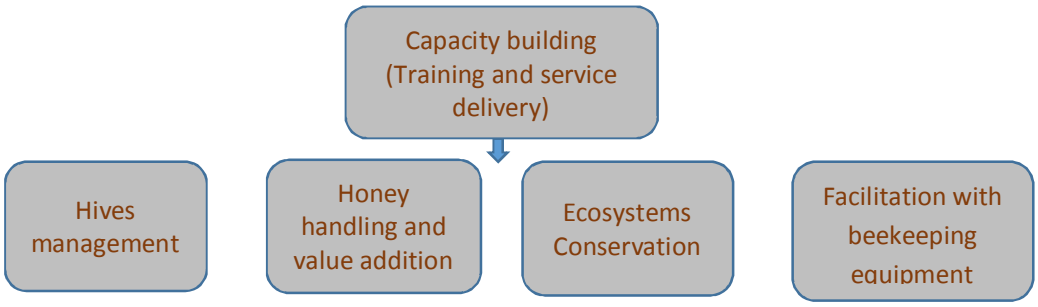
Figure 3: Factors affecting honey quality

Initiatives that add value to the local honey sector

Producers pointed out that capacity building (training and service delivery) plays a key role in adding value to the local honey sector. The training is done on different topics related to beekeeping and honey production (Figure 4). Capacity building in the study areas is frequently done and this contributes to the quality of honey produced. Capacity building is done through extension services, groups exchange visits, demonstrations, conferences and workshops. International organizations, local and national government organizations, non-governmental

organizations, honey producer groups, research institutions and private companies were identified as the facilitators of the initiatives that add value to the honey sector.

Figure 4: Overview of initiatives that add value to the honey sector



Conclusion

The increasing global demand for quality food products is an opportunity for Kenyan honey producers who produce high quality honeys to increase their premiums through valorization. Protected Geographical Indications (PGI) could be a useful tool to enhance this. PGI gives honey producers an opportunity to signal the quality of their honey. Identifying the honey attributes related to their area of production is a step towards PGI registration. Through PGI, honey producers will be protected from imitations and free-riding. From the preliminary study, honey producersô and consumers´ perceptions on honey reputation and quality was attributed to the geographical area where the honey is produced. Kenya thus, has honeys with a potential for GI labeling. An in-depth/detailed study to understand key requirements for PGI registration of potential honeys in Kenya is currently ongoing.

Acknowledgement

I thank the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, Danida Fellowship Centre, Danish Beekeepers' Association, University of Nairobi, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, National Museums of Kenya for their support in this study. I also thank the honey producers and consumers in the areas of study for their useful information.

References

Appiah, M (2011). Geographical Indications-The state of Play in Africa: A paper presented at Workshop on theme ñCreating Value through labeling and Indications: The power of Originò Kampala Uganda.

Aubard, A. (2010). The use of Geographical Indications to promote economic development: Issues, opportunities, policy options, GI project for ACP countries, TradeCom Facility in Blakeney M. *et al* 2012.

AU and EC (2011). Report of the workshop on geographical indications: creating value through geographical labeling and indications: the power of origin. Kampala.

Bainkong G. (2014). Cameroon: Oku White Honey - the Fruits of Certification http://allafrica.com/stories/201409110549.html.

EC. (2006). Labelling: competitiveness,consumer information and better regulation for the EU. In H. a. C. Protection (Ed.).

Government of Kenya (GOK): Ministry of Livestock Development, (2008). Session Paper no 2 of 2008 on National Livestock Policy.

KIPI. (2009). MoU Swiss-Kenya project on Geographical Indications (SKGI).