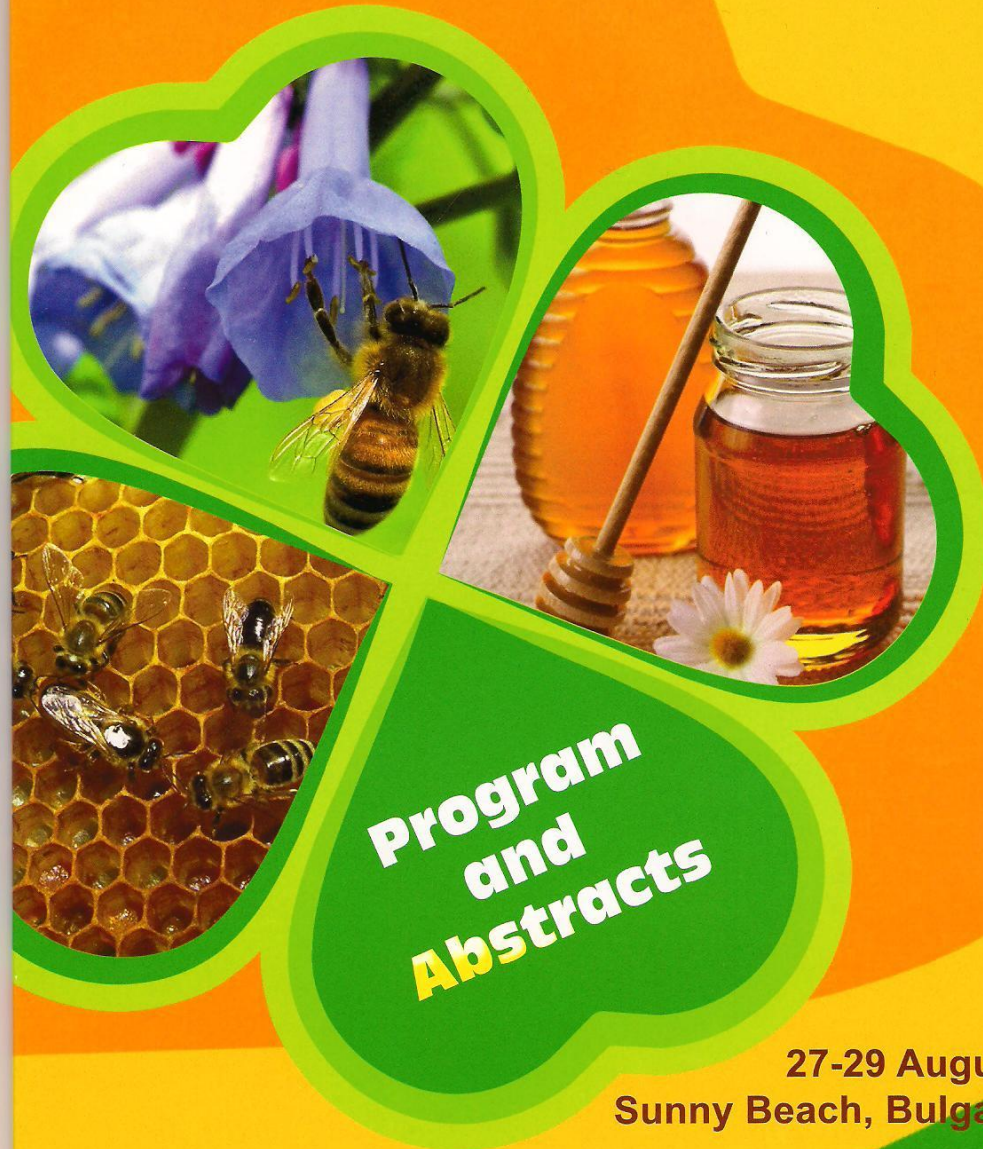


**Apimondia
First World Conference
on Organic Beekeeping**



**Program
and
Abstracts**

**27-29 August,
Sunny Beach, Bulgaria**

31. ORGANIC BEEKEEPING IN PORTUGAL

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Beekeeping in Portugal is an agricultural activity that over the past years has seen a reduction in the number of registered operators. However, this behaviour is not the result of abandonment, as found in general for other agriculture activities, but is due to an increase of beekeepers professionalism, as evidenced by the steady number of registered hives. The decrease in the number of beekeepers reflects the actual disappearance of hobbyists and those farmers who practiced beekeeping as a complementary rural activity (low number of hives / beekeeper) and the appearance of new operators, with higher numbers of hives, where the economic result of beekeeping reflects its core profit.

Despite the favourable conditions in terms of spontaneous flora richness and suitable locations, until 2003 organic beekeeping did not show great vitality at national level, with only 248 registered colonies in organic production. It was therefore vital to encourage this production mode, outlining their advantages and disadvantages (including the use of sanitarian treatments against the Varroa mite), clarifying the applicable regulation, and most importantly identifying the obstacles to be overcome if a beekeeper wishes to convert an apiary to organic beekeeping.

In 2004, we started a four year project in organic beekeeping, together with two regional beekeepers organizations, in the northeast of Portugal. The project aims, at the first stage, to overcome the difficulties evidenced by the few organic beekeepers installed, particularly regarding the regulations/certification procedures/costs and the beekeeping practices in controlling Varroa (until 2005 there were no authorized treatments available for organic beekeeping in Portugal). At the final stage, the goal of the project was to create regional clusters of successful organic beekeepers that could spread along the country.

After the project reached its end in 2008, the number of registered colonies increased over 2,500% (more than 2,000 colonies were located in the northeast region), with the first organic certified beeswax company arising from inside the project. Today many organic beekeeping workshops are organized every month by beekeepers organizations throughout the country. The importance of organic products in today's market and in European agriculture policies is also essential.

Thanks to the beekeepers associations of Parque Natural de Montesinho and Parque Natural do Douro Internacional.