BEST PRACTICES

Creation of a certified supply chain of Park Pollen

Institutional information

Gran Sasso and Laga Mountains National Park
Italy, Abruzzo
www.gransassolagapark.it

Sommario

Explain your case in one or two sentences

In beekeeping production, pollen does not see an experience and tradition equivalent to the considerable production potential. The botanical richness of protected areas has suggested the enhancement of unifloral honeys, similar experience has not developed compared to the different pollens collected by bees. There is a limited production of pollen that is marketed as dried.
This is a big gap, since pollen is a natural product, with high potential for use and considered one of the richest and most complete foodstuff so much so that it is considered a "superfood" thanks to its high content of nutrients. Pollen from protected areas takes advantage of the extraordinary variety of species and environments almost intact. This has positive promotional implications given the particularly evocative character of the protected areas.

Background information: How was the situation previous to your actions?

Pollen consumption is growing despite the fact that an effective specialised network for the preparation, processing and distribution of this product is not well structured in relation to market demand. The entire pollen chain, from harvesting to marketing of the packaged product, is based on traditional processing. At present, the producers give the large distribution the product already dried with very different methods of collection, transport, sifting, freezing and subsequent drying.

What were the needs you identified?

In the face of growing market demand, it is necessary to set up production processes to ensure a safe product that at the same time has not undergone processes of degradation of its nutritional, organoleptic and health characteristics in general.
The project seeks to meet the needs of the production sector that intends to differentiate and start a "pollen supply chain" that in recent times is experiencing a strong growth in the demand for "fresh product".

What solution you found to cover those needs?

After verifying the feasibility of a certified pollen supply chain of the Park, the technical-scientific notions are transferred to the operators through the promotion of the pollen production sector. In particular, through a specific funding call, the purchase of equipment for the pollen supply chain will

be supported, also in consortium form, giving priority to young beekeepers and to those who intend to undertake this activity in the form of a first settlement.

What actions did you take to reach the solution?

During the project, the following steps has been taken:

- analysis of the criticality of the various phases of primary production, proposing suitable collection and processing methods aimed at safeguarding the integrity and healthiness of the product;
- definition of the collection/processing processes, verification of methodologies aimed at obtaining a product that can be easily preserved over time and that best preserves the organoleptic characteristics originally present;
- proposal of internal traceability procedures aimed at containing and limiting any risk of products unsuitable for consumption being delivered to the packaging.

If any, which partners or other organisations did you involve during the process?

Considering the complexity of the project, especially with regard to the aspects related to laboratory analysis and technological aspects, the collaboration with the University of Rome Tor Vergata, Department of Biology for aspects related to analysis and processing of results has been formalized. The University will also contribute to the drafting of a production specification which will then be used for the production of certified pollen.

What were the main problems or difficulties you had to face?

The limited production and limited sale of pollen by the beekeepers themselves has led to the marketing only of dried pollen. The sector suffers from the typical disadvantages of a niche production not yet established on the market and the inherent weaknesses of the product itself and the production methods. Precisely these negative aspects, linked to a precise know-how in the production of quality pollen, have hindered the development of this particular micro-line.

What is the situation now, after your actions?

The project offers development opportunities by introducing elements of:

- in comparison with a traditional production of dried pollen, it gives the possibility to produce "fresh" pollen which can thus be considered a "new product" compared to what is generally found on the market;
- the definition and schematization of procedures for the collection and processing of the product, aimed at guaranteeing the maintenance of the pollen's nutritional, health and organoleptic characteristics, offers operators in the supply chain a new production opportunity.

Main lessons learned along the way?

Faced with the demand for fresh and non-dried pollen, it is interesting to start production processes in order to provide a safe product that has not undergone processes of degradation of nutritional, organoleptic and health characteristics.

By supporting bees and their pollinating action, it is also possible to counteract the damage that the decrease in pollinating insects creates to the environment and agricultural crops.

The measures that tend to favour beekeeping activities are elements that support the environment and make agricultural production possible.

Annex:
ImaE.1
ImaE.2
ImaE.3