



FROM THE HELLENIC SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY OF APICULTURE-SERICULTURE

# A CRY OF DESPERATION FROM **GREEK** BEEKEEPERS OVER THE **PROHIBITION** OF BEEKEEPING IN FOREST AREAS

The following open letter, submitted by the Hellenic Scientific Society of Apiculture, is addressed to all member countries of the European Beekeepers Federation (EBA). It highlights the increasing legal and administrative restrictions

that threaten forest beekeeping in Greece — a situation that, as the authors warn, could soon affect beekeepers across Europe if not collectively addressed. The Society calls for solidarity, exchange of information, and joint action to protect

forest beekeeping as a vital and environmentally beneficial practice.

Beekeeping in Greece relies heavily on the ability of beekeepers to move their colonies into forested areas. Pine, fir, and oak are the three main forest tree species whose honeydew production accounts for approximately 70% of the country's annual honey yield. In addition, forested landscapes rich in heather, strawberry tree, rock-rose, acacia, and others—as well as areas with Mediterranean scrub, aromatic plants (such as thyme and oregano), or legumes—serve as vital environments for colony development and for the production of many bee products.

In recent years, placing beehives in forested regions has become increasingly difficult due to various factors, such as the expansion of other human activities like tourism, but mainly because the beekeeping sector has been unjustly targeted as a major risk factor for forest fires.

As a result, Forest Services in many parts of Greece have issued Forest Prohibition Orders which, although not legally justified, impose arbitrary restrictions regarding distances from forest roads, paths, water sources, holiday houses, and

other features—making it practically impossible for beekeepers to set up their hives. Moreover, they completely forbid the transfer of beehives into burnt forest areas for arbitrary periods of time (e.g., 5 or 10 years), thereby depriving forests of the valuable assistance bees provide in their natural regeneration.

Furthermore, the newly established Ministry of Climate Crisis and Civil Protection, along with the Fire Service under its supervision, has issued Fire Protection Regulations that make forest beekeeping practically impossible. For example, one article of Fire Regulation 9/2024 specifies a “minimum distance of at least ten (10) meters between hive installations and trees or bushes.” Greek forests, however, are characterized by rugged terrain and dense vegetation with few clearings or mountain meadows. Consequently, this measure is unrealistic. Even if a beekeeper attempts to clear the area around the apiary, this action will violate forest protection laws prohibiting the cutting of vegetation. Thus, the regulations of one ministry directly contradict the laws of another.

Since 1998, the management of forest fires in Greece has been assigned to the Fire Service,



which lacks the specialized personnel, knowledge, and experience previously held by the Forest Service—an agency that had competently carried out this crucial responsibility for decades.

We kindly ask for your support in addressing this difficult situation faced by Greek beekeeping. We would appreciate it if you could inform us about the laws and regulations in your countries regarding the placement of beehives in forest areas—specifically for short-term exploitation of honeydew flows (10 to 30 days), and not for the establishment of permanent apiaries.

We would also like to know whether there are any specific fire-prevention regulations applicable during the summer months concerning beekeeping activities (e.g., the use of smokers), as well as any rules regarding the placement of beehives in burned forest areas.

In addition, we would be interested to learn whether beekeeping is included as an economic activity within the Forest Management Plans of your countries.

Finally, we request information about any existing legal framework governing beekeeping in urban and peri-urban areas, considering that many European capitals and large cities are ad-

acent to, or even developed within, forested zones.

This issue is not only a Greek problem—it concerns all European beekeepers. If the false perception that bees and beekeepers represent a threat to forests becomes established, similar restrictions could soon spread to other EU countries. Forest ecosystems, biodiversity, and pollination services are shared European assets. Protecting the right to practice sustainable beekeeping within forests is, therefore, a common responsibility. The collaboration of all EBA member states is essential to ensure that beekeeping remains recognized as a vital, environmentally beneficial, and irreplaceable activity for the health of our natural landscapes.

For further communication on this matter, please contact:

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# SUPPORT PER HIVE

## WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

As you have been informed, EU Commissioner Mr. Hansen has proposed changes in the implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy. As part of this, he also proposed that beekeepers can also be paid support per beehive from environmental funds – for the pollination service of bees.

In September, this proposal was presented to the AGRI Committee. The procedure is continuing in the EU Parliament. The proposal is ex-

pected to be adopted either at the end of 2025 or at the beginning of 2026. This will be followed by the “bureaucratic” part of the procedure, and its inclusion in national regulations. Realistically, this could be arranged in the middle of 2026.

As soon as there is new information, we will publish it on the EBA website and in EBA MAGAZINE.

**Boštjan Noč**  
President of the EBA