

Stakeholders call for a specific policy to promote bee keeping

REPUBLICA

KATHMANDU, Dec 24: Stakeholders have underlined the need for a specific policy to uplift bee farming and boost honey exports.

At a Public Private Dialogue (PPD) held in the capital on 'Enhancing Export Competitiveness of Honey', they said Nepali honey is not becoming a major exportable commodity despite being enlisted under Nepal Trade Integration Strategy (NTIS) in the lack of specific policy.

The dialogue was organized by South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) and GIZ.

Speaking at the program, Chiranjibi Nepal, economic affairs advisor to the Prime Minister, said the country has not been able to promote exports of NTIS products, including honey, in the absence of a clear economic policy. "The government should adopt export-oriented policy and develop specific policies for different products so as to boost export of NTIS products," he said, urging the private sector to lobby for such policies. He also said lack of quality certification is hindering export of honey. "Germany is one of the biggest markets for honey. But our products do not have access to Germany and other European markets in the absence of quality certification," he added.

Toya Narayan Gyawali, joint secretary of Ministry of Commerce and Supplies (MoCS), urged farmers to focus on quality and production volume before setting sights on international market. Stating that Nepali honey has failed to meet EU standards, Gyawali said: "Farmers should first increase production volume and meet quality standards. Then the government will help farmers to find international market."

Bee farmers have also urged the government to bring specific policy to promote commercial bee farming. "We have not been able to increase production volume in the lack of proper policy and subsidy from the government," Dharma Raj Shrestha, chairman of Central Honey Entrepreneurs Association of Nepal, said. "In the lack of necessary trainings and technical know-how, local farmers are producing honey using traditional methods." Shrestha also urged the government to initiate a grading program for honey on the basis of quality.

In his working paper, Posh Raj Pandey, chairman of SAWTEE, commented on declining export and increasing import of honey. Stating that lack of beekeeping policy and incentives were hindering large-scale bee farming, Pandey urged the government to introduce beekeeping policy at the earliest. He also suggested to the farmers to focus on branding.

According to Trade and Export Promotion Center (TEPC), 837 kg of honey was exported to different countries in 2013, compared to nearly 8 tons in 2012.