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REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL

on the implementation of apiculture programmes

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1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of the apiculture sector goes beyond its small size when compared to other agricultural sectors. It makes an invaluable contribution to pollinating crops, fruits and other flora in addition to providing honey and other apiculture products. The EU's Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) has several tools to support the apiculture sector, one being the apiculture programmes, set out in Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013[1] (the CMO).

Under Article 225(a) of the CMO, the Commission has to present a report to the European Parliament and the Council every three years on implementation of the measures concerning the apiculture sector as set out in Articles 55, 56 and 57. The report must also include the latest developments on beehive identification systems. This report meets the requirement of Article 225(a).

The report covers implementation of the national apiculture programmes for 2020-2022, drawn up for apiculture years 2020-2022, which run from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2022, and as notified to the Commission by 15 March 2019. These programmes were subsequently modified in 2021 to extend them until 31 December 2022 as required by Article 55(1) of the CMO and as amended by the transitional regulation.[2] The modification also increased the EU's annual budgetary allocation from EUR 40 million to EUR 60 million[3] in 2021. Their extension allows for a seamless transition from the current to the future interventions included in the CAP strategic plans. The report does not cover implementation during the extended apiculture year from 1 August 2021 to 31 December 2022. The full report on implementation during the extended year can only be prepared at the end of 2023 since payments to beneficiaries extend until 15 October 2023.

This is the eighth report issued by the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on implementation of the apiculture programmes. The report does not cover all aspects of beekeeping but focuses on implementation of apiculture programmes. It does however provide a short overview of the apiculture sector in the EU and information on EU support to the apiculture sector under the future CAP strategic plans.

The EU has provided direct support to the beekeeping sector since 1997[4]. It gives Member States the option to draw up national programmes for their apiculture sector. The objective of these programmes is to improve the general conditions for producing and marketing apiculture products: honey, royal jelly, pollen, propolis and beeswax.

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[1] Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common organisation of the markets in agricultural products OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 671.

[2] Regulation (EU) 2020/2220 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 December 2020 laying down certain transitional provisions for support from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and from the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) in the years 2021 and 2022 and amending Regulations (EU) No 1305/2013, (EU) No 1306/2013 and (EU) No 1307/2013 as regards resources and application in the years 2021 and 2022 and Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 as regards resources and the distribution of such support in respect of the years 2021 and 2022 OJ L 437, 28.12.2020, p. 1.

[3] Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2093 of 17 December 2020 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2021 to 2027, OJ L 433 I, 22.12.2020, p. 11. The total amount provided for in the multiannual financial framework in respect of the European Agricultural Guarantee fund includes an increase to EUR 60 million per year for apiculture programmes.

[4] Council Regulation (EC) No 1221/97 of 25 June 1997 laying down general rules for the application of measures to improve the production and marketing of honey, OJ L 173, 1.7.97, p. 1.

The apiculture programmes are co-financed by the European Union at a 50% rate and they run for three years. The programmes are voluntary but all Member States have chosen to introduce them, showing the strong interest of Member States and the needs of the sector. As from 2023, the sector will continue to receive support under mandatory apiculture interventions that are part of the recently approved CAP strategic plans. Member States may also increase the rate of co-financing from a minimum of 50% to a maximum of 70%.

2. METHODOLOGY

This report is based on the following sources of information:

- Information notified by the Member States under Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/1366 with regard to aid in the apiculture sector[5], including the number of beehives in their territories.
- Information notified by the Member States under Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/1368 with regard to aid in the apiculture sector[6], including the annual implementation reports, laid down in Article 10 of that Regulation. Those annual reports include a summary of the expenditure incurred in euro during the apiculture year, broken down by measure, and the results based on performance indicators for each implemented measure. However, these indicators are not harmonised at EU level and have not been used to draw conclusions in the context of this report.
- Data on honey production and international trade from Eurostat[7], UN Comtrade[8] and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)[9].

Detailed figures and summary tables on the honey market and on the national apiculture programmes are available on the Commission's Europa website[10].

3. OVERVIEW OF THE EU APICULTURE SECTOR

3.1 Production and prices

The latest available data on production and prices in the EU cover 2017 and 2018, reported by Member States in 2019 under their national apiculture programmes for 2020-2022. The Member States should report similar market data for 2021 and 2022 in 2023[11].

[5] Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/1366 of 11 May 2015 supplementing Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to aid in the apiculture sector, OJ L 211, 8.8.2015, p. 3-6.
[6] Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/1368 of 6 August 2015 laying down rules for the application of Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to aid in the apiculture sector, OJ L 211, 8.8.2015, p. 9-16.
[7] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat.
[8] https://comtrade.un.org/.
[9] http://www.fao.org/home/en/.
[10] https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/animals-and-animal-products/animal-products/honey_en
[11] In accordance with the requirements laid down in Article 15(3) of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/1475 of 6 September 2022 laying down detailed rules for

Production

The data notified in 2019 under the 2020-2022 programmes for 2018 show that there were approximately 17.3 million hives in the EU managed by 615 058 beekeepers. Since then, the number of beehives has grown to 18.9 million in 2020 and 20 million hives in 2021. The latest 2018 data on the number of beekeepers also indicate a substantial increase since 2016, when there were 568 194 beekeepers reported for the 2017-2019 programmes. Note, however, that there is no harmonised method to define beekeepers, nor to estimate the number of beekeepers, so a change in that number may not necessarily reflect a general trend in the sector.

In the absence of production figures reported by Member States since 2018, which were provided in the previous report of 17 December 2019[12], this report draws on data from the FAO. According to this data, the European Union produced 217 864 tonnes of honey in 2020, making the EU the second largest honey producer in the world, after China with 458 100 tonnes. Since 2018, EU production has fallen by around 16% from 258 610 tonnes. The EU does not produce enough honey to cover demand. In 2020, it was around 60% self-sufficient[13], i.e. roughly the same level as in 2018. The main supplier for imported honey in 2020 was Ukraine (31% of imports) followed by China (21% of imports).

Prices

According to the latest available data reported by Member States for 2018, the EU average price for multi-floral honey was EUR 6.46/kg at the site of production and EUR 3.79/kg for sale in bulk at wholesalers. Prices for honey vary greatly between Member States, depending on the quality and point of sale. Compared to the previous figures provided for 2015, the average price has barely changed. However, the average production cost has increased from EUR 3.21/kg in 2015 to EUR 3.90/kg in 2018, possibly leaving a smaller profit margin per kg of honey produced. Since the Member States do not report the volumes of honey sold in bulk and at site of production, it is difficult to calculate the resulting profit margin for producers.

3.2 Trade[14]

Imports

The EU is only 60% self-sufficient in honey. In 2021, the EU imported 173 403 tonnes of honey for a total value of EUR 406.1 million. The EU is the second largest importer of honey in the world, after North America, and Ukraine is its main supplier. Since 2019, EU imports from Ukraine have increased from 44 523 tonnes in 2019 to 53 777 tonnes in 2021. Over the same period, imports from China, the EU's second largest supplier, have also increased from 45 108 to 48 109 tonnes, while imports from the third and fourth suppliers, Argentina and Mexico, fell from 21 269 tonnes and 18 205 tonnes respectively in 2019, to 14 396 and 15 486 tonnes in 2021.

implementation of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the evaluation of the CAP Strategic Plans and the provision of information for monitoring and evaluation OJ L 232, 7.9.2022, p. 8.

[12] COM_COM(2019)0635_EN.pdf (europa.eu)

[13] Self-sufficiency rate = EU production/(production+imports-exports).

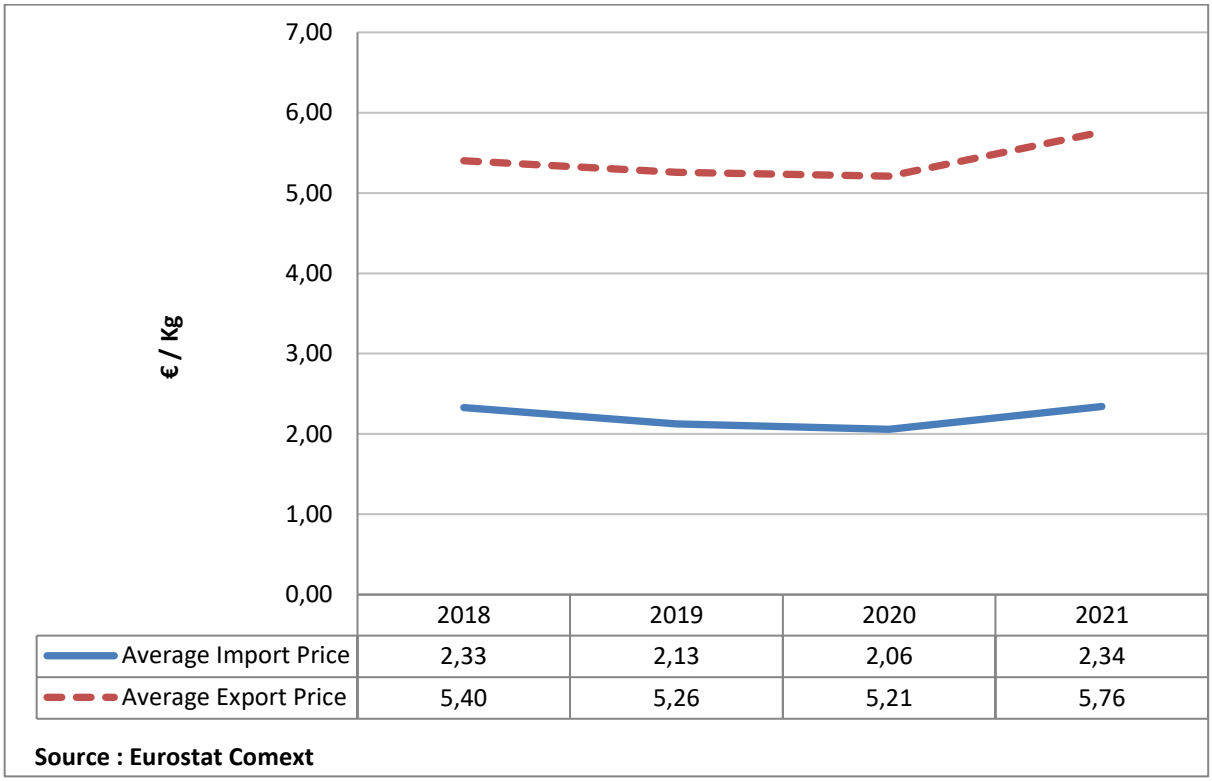
[14] Source of trade data: Eurostat Comext, https://trade.ec.europa.eu/tradehelp/statistics

Honey imported from non-EU countries is usually cheaper than honey produced in the EU, and for 2021, the average import price was EUR 2.34/kg.

Exports

The volume of EU exports are much lower when compared to imports. In 2021, the EU exported 25 421 tonnes of honey for a total value of EUR 146.4 million, representing around 15% of EU imports in volume. The main markets for EU honey are United Kingdom, Switzerland, Saudi Arabia, the USA and Japan. In 2021, the average export price was EUR 5.76/kg.

Figure 1: Average prices for honey imported to and exported from the EU



	2018	2019	2020	2021
Average Import Price	2,33	2,13	2,06	2,34
Average Export Price	5,40	5,26	5,21	5,76

Source : Eurostat Comext

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL APICULTURE PROGRAMMES

4.1 Legal basis

The legal basis for national apiculture programmes 2020-2022 is Articles 55 to 57 of the CMO, supplemented by:

- Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/1366, amended by Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/580[15] and
- Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/1368, amended by Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/166[16].

[15] Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/580 of 1 February 2021 amending Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/1366 as regards the basis for allocating the financial contribution in the apiculture sector, OJ L 124, 12.4.2021, p. 1.
[16] Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/166 of 10 February 2021 amending Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/1368 as regards the extension of the national programmes in the apiculture sector, OJ L 48, 11.2.2021, p. 1.

The programmes for apiculture years 2020-2022 and their financing were approved through Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/974 of 12 June 2019[17]. These programmes were amended in 2021 to extend them until the end of 2022 and to increase the annual budget from EUR 40 million to EUR 60 million (representing the EU's contribution). Amended programmes were approved through Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/974 of 9 June 2021[18].

4.2 Objectives and measures

The main objective of the programmes is to improve the general conditions for producing and marketing apiculture products in the EU. The 2013 CAP reform brought in changes to the programmes with the aim of adapting eligible measures to the needs of the sector and of improving the allocation of the EU budget by improving the methods used by the Member States to estimate the number of beehives on their territories. The eligible measures for the 2020-2022 programmes follow on from the same measures available for the 2017-2019 programmes and are described below.

(a) **Technical assistance to beekeepers and beekeepers' organisations.** Member States use this measure to fund training, organise courses and print educational brochures, as well as to purchase technical equipment for the production and primary processing of honey and to provide specific support to young beekeepers.

(b) **Combating beehive invaders and diseases, particularly varroasis.** The scope of this measure was already extended in the previous programme to combat other beehive invaders and diseases, in addition to varroasis, such as the Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina)* and the Small Hive Beetle (*Aethina tumida*). However, most programmes still focus on combating varroasis by supporting actions to decrease the parasitic load and by informing beekeepers of the need to and methods of combating the varroa mite.

(c) **Rationalisation of transhumance.** Support for actions to assist the management of transhumance such as work on identification of beehives and frames, managing a transhumance register, investing in material and equipment facilitating transhumance and mapping flower varieties.

(d) **Measures to support laboratories for the analysis of apiculture products with the aim of helping beekeepers to market and increase the value of their products.** The scope of this measure (though mainly used to fund analyses of the physico-chemical properties of honey) also covers other apiculture products[19] such as royal jelly, pollen, propolis or beeswax. This information enables beekeepers to better market and increase the value of their products.

[17] Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/974 of 12 June 2019 approving the national programmes to improve the production and marketing of apiculture products submitted by the Member States under Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council (notified under document C(2019) 4177) OJ L 157, 14.6.2019, p. 28.

[18] Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/974 of 9 June 2021 approving the amended national programmes to improve the production and marketing of apiculture products submitted by the Member States under Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council (notified under document C(2021) 4021), OJ L 215, 17.6.2021, p. 37.

[19] The apiculture products covered by the apiculture programmes are listed in Part XXII of Annex I to Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 and are honey, royal jelly, propolis, pollen and beeswax.

(e) **Measures to support the restocking beehives.** The measure provides assistance to cover bee losses, thereby avoiding drops in production. The funding is mainly used to purchase bee colonies, queens or new hives and to promote the production of queen bees, particularly indigenous breeds.

(f) **Cooperation with specialised bodies for the implementation of applied research programmes in the field of beekeeping and apiculture products.** This enables Member States to fund specific research projects aimed at improving beekeeping, production or the quality of honey, and to disseminate the results of such projects.

(g) **Market monitoring.** This support funds market monitoring of apiculture products and prices to help improve the conditions of production and support national strategies for monitoring the market.

(h) **Enhancement of product quality with a view to exploiting the potential of products on the market.** This funds support actions to tap the market potential of honey and other apiculture products.

4.3 EU budget for national apiculture programmes and usage rate

EU funds allocated to the apiculture sector increased from EUR 36 million per year for the 2017-2019 apiculture programmes to EUR 40 million[20] per year under the 2020-2022 programmes. These were amended in 2021 to extend their duration and increase the budgetary allocation to EUR 60 million as from 2021.

The EU's contribution to apiculture programmes corresponds to 50% of the expenditure borne by the Member States. For the apiculture years 2020-2022, funding of EUR 318.9 million[21] was available to national apiculture programmes in the EU, 48% more than the funding available for the period 2017-2019. Half of this represents the EU contribution and the other half the Member States' co-financing.

Although the funding was not fully utilised, the absorption rate was still relatively high in both 2019 and 2020 but fell substantially in 2021. This drop in the usage rate in 2021 can be explained by the substantial increase in budgetary allocation and the somewhat late amendment to the programmes to absorb these funds, as they were notified in March 2021 and approved in June 2021. Although Member States were advised of the upcoming changes in 2020 and encouraged to maximise the uptake of funds in 2021, several Member States had difficulties in absorbing the increased funds, particularly those that received significantly higher funding than in 2019. In fact, while in 2020, 21 Member States had an absorption rate of 80% or more and only 6 scored below 80%; in 2021, only 11 Member States had an absorption rate of 80% or more and 16 were below 80%. Table 1 summarises the EU funding and execution rate for apiculture programmes in 2020-2022 and in 2019 apiculture year (for which data was not available at the time of publication of the last report on 17 December 2019).

[20] Total EU contribution for the EU-28, including the United Kingdom.
[21] Total amount for the EU-27, excluding the UK.

Table 1: EU funding and execution rate for apiculture programmes

EU funds available for	2019 apiculture year 2017-2019 programmes	2020 apiculture year 2020-2022 programmes	2021 apiculture year 2020-2022 programmes	2022 apiculture year 2020-2022 programmes	2023 financial year for apiculture interventions under the CAP Strategic Plans Jan – Oct 2023
in EUR	36 000 000	39 441 410[22]	60 000 000	60 000 000	60 000 000[23]
Amount of EU funds used by Member States in EUR*	33 757 308	35 947 262	46 772 973	Will be notified by 31 December 2023	Will be notified by 15 June 2024
Execution rate	94%	91%	78%		

**Source: Member States' Annual Implementation Reports submitted in accordance with Article 10 of Regulation (EU) 2015/1368.*

4.4 Allocation of the EU contribution per Member State

The rules for calculating the allocation of EU contributions to the apiculture programmes as laid down in Article 4 of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/1366 are based on the proportion of beehives notified by each Member State participating in the programme, together with a set minimum EU contribution of EUR 25 000 per programme. However, if a Member State requests less than its entitlement on the basis of its proportion of beehives, the remaining EU funding may be distributed to other Member States requesting more than their theoretical share of the funding.

In accordance with Article 4 of Regulation (EU) 2015/1366, the allocation of EU funds for the 2020-2022 apiculture programmes notified in 2019 was based on the number of beehives communicated by Member States in 2017 and 2018. From 2021 onwards, the increased EU contributions were allocated as set out in Annex 10 to the CAP Strategic Plan Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2021/2115)[24]. These allocations were calculated on the basis of the number of beehives communicated in 2013 by the Member States in their apiculture programmes for 2014-2016, adjusted by the applications for funding in the 2017-2019 programming period.[25]

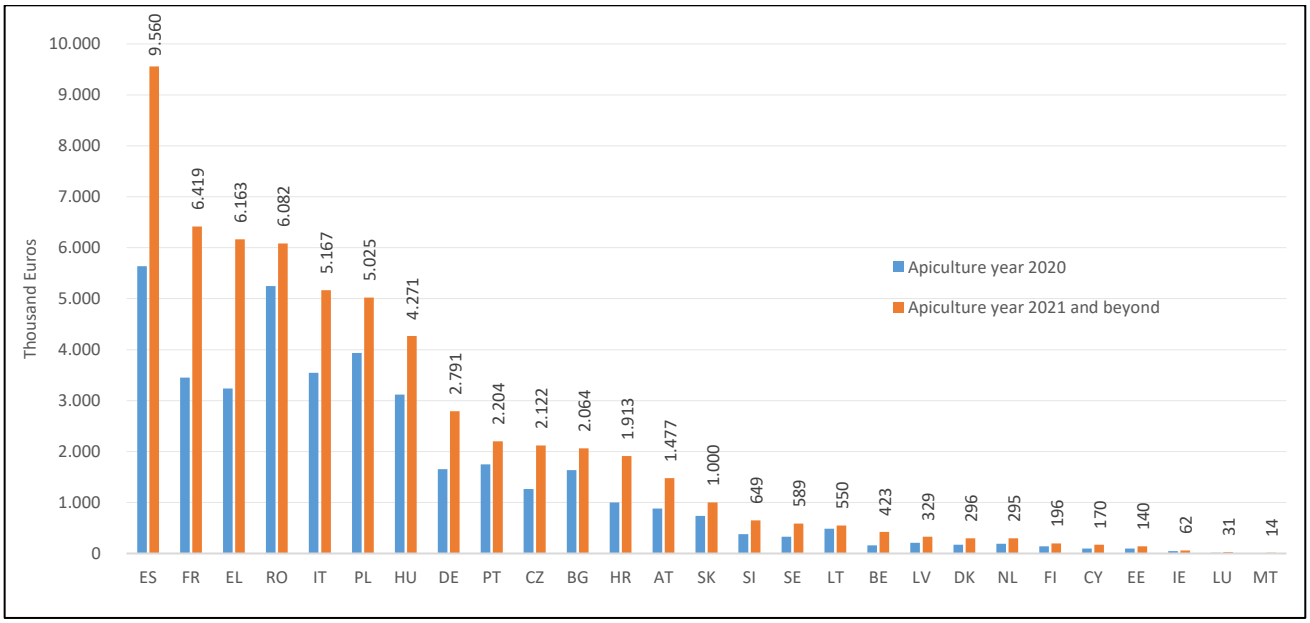
[22] EU contribution for EU 27 excluding the UK.

[23] The budget for the 2023 financial year may also be used for payment of measures implemented from 1 August 2022 to 31 December 2022, as explained in section 6.

[24] Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the common agricultural policy (CAP strategic plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1305/2013 and (EU) No 1307/2013, OJ L 435 6.12.2021, p. 1.

[25] Article 1 of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/580.

Figure 2: Allocation of the EU contribution per Member State for the 2020-2022 apiculture years



Source: Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/974 (for 2020) and Commission Implementing Decision 2021/974 (for 2021 and 2022).

4.5 Expenditure incurred per type of measure

Under Article 10 of Regulation 2015/1368, Member States are required to provide by 15 March each year an annual implementation report covering the previous apiculture year. The first two annual reports, corresponding to the 2020[26] and 2021[27] apiculture years, were notified in 2021 and 2022 respectively. The breakdown of expenditure per type of measure for the 2021 apiculture year is shown in the pie chart below *(Figure 3)*. For comparison, Figure 4 gives a similar breakdown per type of measure for the 2020 apiculture year, showing that the overall distribution, measured as a percentage, was similar.

In 2021, two measures (**technical assistance** and **combating beehive invaders)** accounted for 54% of the available funding. In 2020, similar to previous years, the combined rate for these measures was close to 60%. This reflects the continuous need for upskilling of beekeepers and investment in beekeeping equipment supported under measure A (technical assistance) and beekeeping practices to fight against diseases and beehives' invaders supported under measure B (combating beehive invaders and diseases).

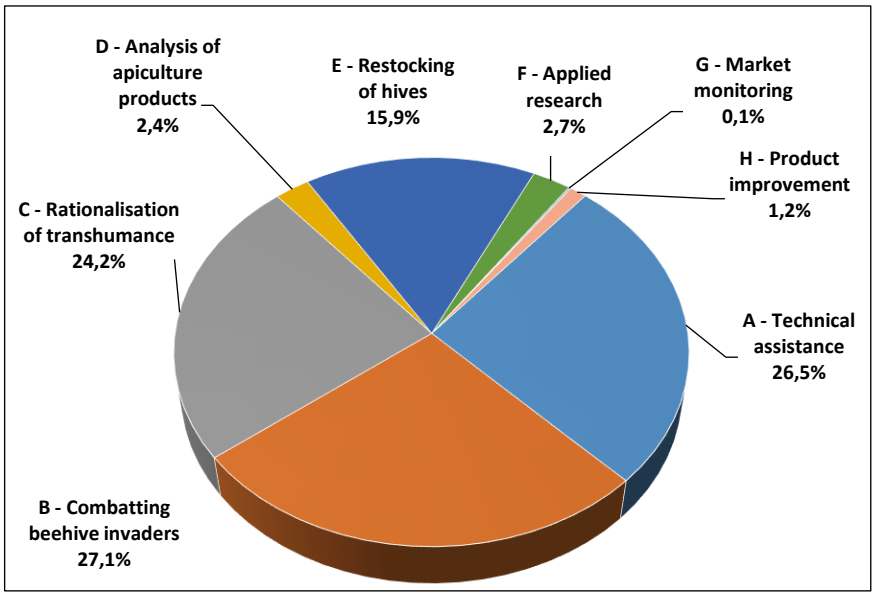
Similar to previous years, the next two most popular measures were **rationalisation of transhumance** and **restocking of beehives**, accounting for 40% of total expenditure across the Member States in 2021 and 34% in 2020. In several Member States, transhumance is an essential beekeeping practice, necessary to cover the nutritional needs of honeybees during the whole beekeeping season and provide pollination services.

[26] Timeframe 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2020.
[27] Timeframe 1 August 2020 to 31 July 2021.

Measures to conduct **applied research** and **analysis of honey** came in at 5th and 6th place in terms of support, receiving 2.7% and 2.4% of the funding available in 2021.

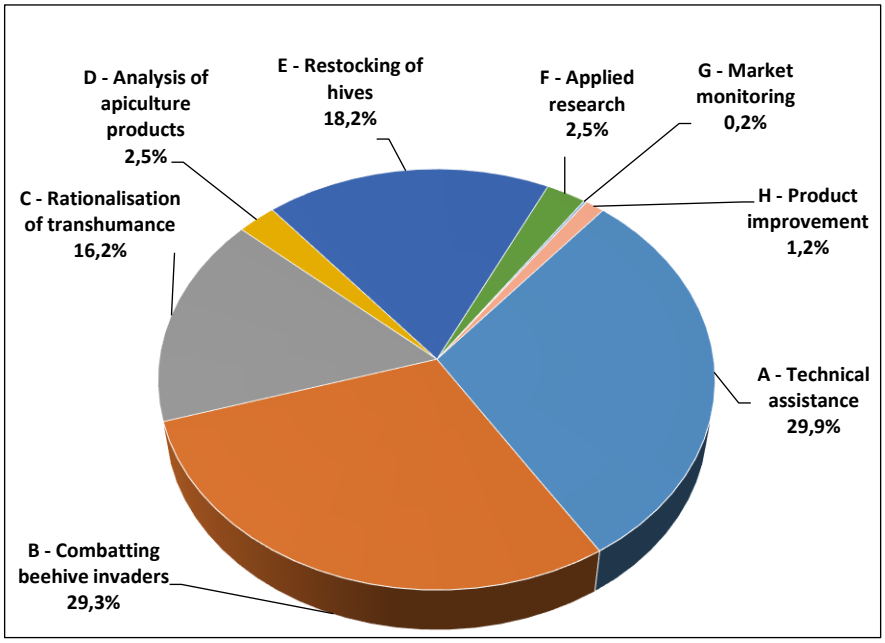
The measures to support **product improvement** and **market monitoring,** which were first introduced in the 2017-2019 programme, together received less than 2% of funding both in 2020 and 2021.

Figure 3: Expenditure in percentage per measure during apiculture year 2021



Source: Member States' annual implementation report for 2021.

Figure 4: Expenditure in percentage per measure during apiculture year 2020



Source: Member States' annual implementation report for 2020.

5. METHODS USED TO DETERMINE THE NUMBER OF BEEHIVES

Under Article 3 of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/1366, as of 2017, Member States submitting apiculture programmes must notify to the Commission each year the number of beehives in their territory that are ready for wintering. Furthermore, Member States were required under Article 2 of said Regulation to have a reliable method to determine this number, which had to be described in their apiculture programmes. This Delegated Regulation was adopted in 2015, based on the empowerment granted under Article 56(1)(b) of the CMO, and laid down the basis for allocating the EU's financial contribution to the Member States' apiculture programmes, based on the number of beehives.

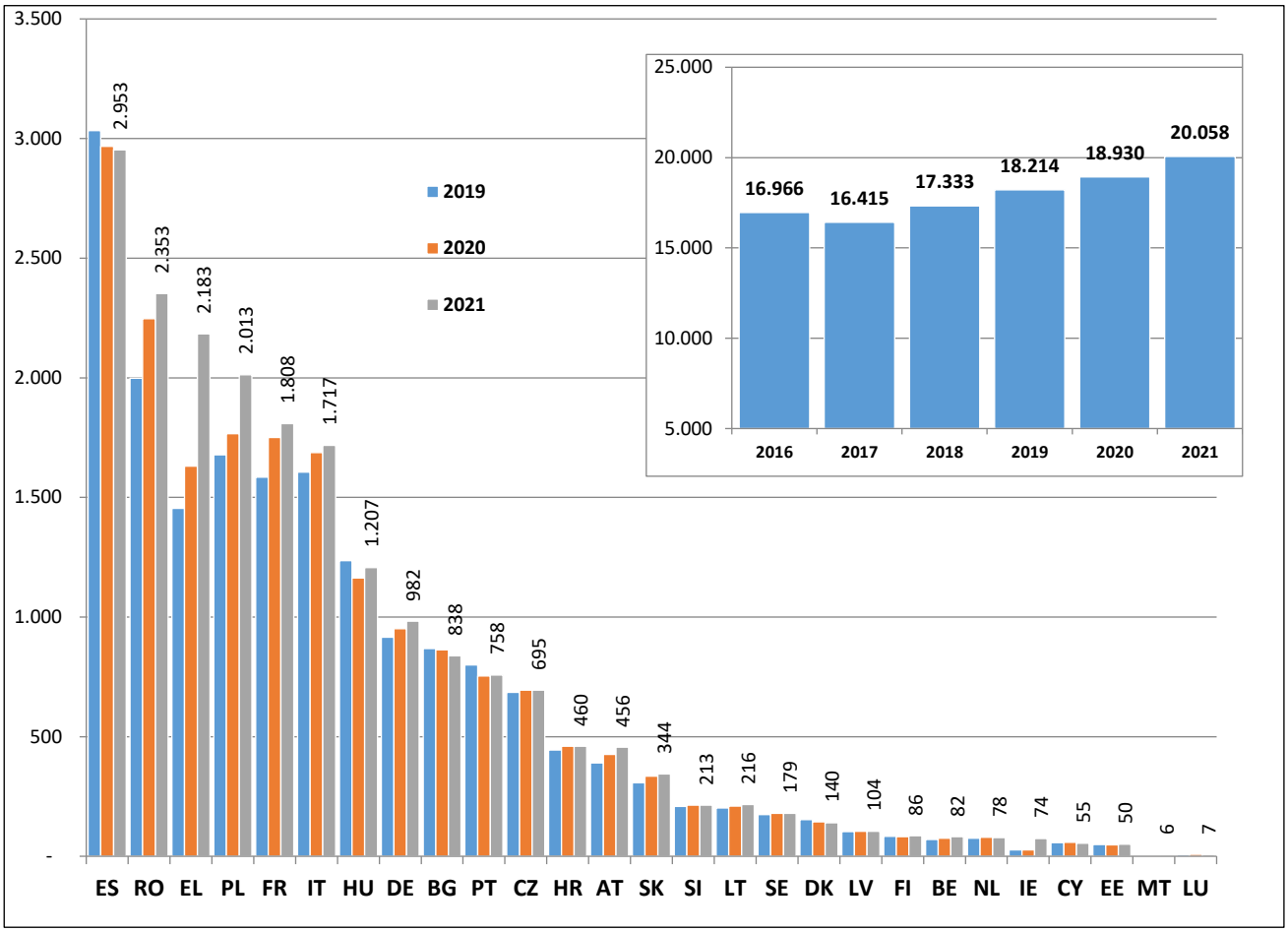
It also stipulated the definition of a beehive as *'… the unit containing a honeybee colony used for the production of honey, other apiculture products or honeybee breeding material, and all the elements necessary for its survival'.*

Although the annual funding to the Member States in the CAP strategic plans will no longer be based on the number of notified beehives, it is still important to know the number of beehives in Member States. This information is necessary to be able to follow developments in the sector, evaluate the impact of support as well as to keep European citizens informed. Under the future CAP plans in accordance with Articles 36 to 38 of Regulation (EU) 2022/126[28], Member States are required to include the description of a reliable method for calculating the number of beehives ready for wintering in their strategic plan and to notify the number of beehives by the 15 June each year. These calculation methods reported by Member States under both the 2020-2022 programmes and the strategic plans continue relatively unchanged from the first reported methods in the 2017-2019 apiculture programmes, described in the previous report of 17 December 2019.

As there was no harmonised rule governing these aspects before the application of that delegated act, the numbers of beehives notified before its application in 2017 cannot be directly compared with the number of beehives notified after 15 March 2017. Nevertheless, the long-term historical trend indicates that the number of beehives in the European Union has increased year on year as shown in Figure 5. This positive trend can be seen in almost all Member States.

[28]Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2022/126 of 7 December 2021 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council with additional requirements for certain types of intervention specified by Member States in their CAP Strategic Plans for the period 2023 to 2027 under that Regulation as well as rules on the ratio for the good agricultural and environmental condition (GAEC) standard 1, OJ L 20, 31.1.2022, p. 52.

Figure 5: Evolution of the number of beehives in the EU in thousands



Source: Member States' annual notification of the numbers of beehives ready for wintering in their territory.

6. APICULTURE IN THE CAP STRATEGIC PLANS AFTER 2022

As from 2023, support to the apiculture sector will be granted through apiculture interventions included in the national CAP strategic plans. While under the CMO, it was voluntary for Member States to implement apiculture programmes, as of 2023 they will be mandatory. Including apiculture in the CAP plans will increase the visibility of the sector and ensure that its contribution to the overall objectives of the common agricultural policy is taken into account.

Funding for apiculture interventions, as set out in Annex X to the CAP Strategic Plan Regulation will remain unchanged from 2023 to 2025, at EUR 60 million per financial year. The budget for 2023 will cater for both the apiculture interventions implemented under the strategic plans (and paid over the period 1 January 2023 to 15 October 2023) and the apiculture measures implemented from 1 August 2022 to 31 December 2022 under the current apiculture programmes (and paid during the period 16 October 2022 to 15 October 2023). Similarly, the financial envelopes for the further financial years will cover expenditure for the apiculture interventions implemented under the

Strategic Plans as well as any possible residual expenditure for the apiculture measures implemented under the current apiculture programmes. A number of Member States will indeed make use of the 2023 financial allocation for the payment of measures implemented during the last 5 months of 2022 as signalled in their Strategic Plans. Another change introduced in the Strategic Plans allows Member States to increase their co-financing rate from the minimum obligatory 50% up to 70% to further enhance their budget. Three Member States (BG, IT and LU) have chosen to do so; the others continue with the obligatory minimum co-financing rate of 50%.

In setting up their apiculture interventions from 2023-2027 under the strategic plan, Member States have to pursue at least one of the specific objectives of the CAP (Article 6(1) of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115).

Similar to current programmes, support for apiculture will be provided through a number of interventions drawn up by Member States in collaboration with representatives of organisations in the beekeeping field. Member States can choose from seven types of interventions in Article 55 of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115, listed below, which carry over from previous measures under the CMO Regulation and further broadens the scope of the support provided. These are:

a) advisory services, technical assistance, training, information and exchange of best practices, including through networking, for beekeepers and beekeepers' organisations;

b) investments in tangible and intangible assets, as well as other actions, including for:

i) combatting beehive invaders and diseases, in particular varroasis;
ii) preventing damage caused by adverse climatic events and promoting the development and use of management practices adapted to changing climate conditions;
iii) restocking of beehives in the Union, including bee breeding;
iv) rationalising transhumance;

c) actions to support laboratories for the analysis of apiculture products, bee losses or productivity drops, and substances potentially toxic to bees;

d) actions to preserve or increase the existing number of beehives in the Union, including bee breeding;

e) cooperation with specialised bodies for the implementation of research programmes in the field of beekeeping and apiculture products;

f) promotion, communication and marketing including market monitoring actions and activities aimed in particular at raising consumer awareness about the quality of apiculture products;

g) actions to enhance product quality.

7. CONCLUSION

The importance of supporting the apiculture sector is recognised by all in the EU, from EU institutions, national and regional authorities to the general public. Though they were voluntary, all Member States have run apiculture programmes in past years in close collaboration with the sector and its representatives. Including apiculture support in the CAP strategic plans as a mandatory component for all Member States further underlines the importance of the sector and recognises its

contribution to the CAP specific objectives, notably in enhancing biodiversity and preserving habitats. It also recognises the valuable support provided through these programmes in addressing the increasing challenges in beekeeping that are compounded by climate change.

The range of measures has increased over the years, particularly with the latest types of interventions introduced in the CAP Strategic Plan Regulation. These interventions expand and improve on the previous measures, providing a broader scope of possible actions to meet the needs of the sector across Member States. Coupled to this, the substantial increase in funding since 2021 and the scope granted to Member States to increase their national co-financing should provide the resources needed for the sector to improve the production and marketing of apiculture products whilst catering for the diverse needs of its beekeepers across the EU. This augurs well for the continued high uptake of the available funds across all Member States.

A good indicator of the positive impact of these programmes on the sector is the number of beehives, which continues to increase year on year. However, this is not always accompanied by an increase in production, which is heavily dependent on climatic conditions amongst other factors. The overall profitability of the sector also depends on a fair price being paid to beekeepers for their products. Average prices for honey in the EU have not increased much over the years, while production costs continue to rise and import prices fall. Overcoming the many challenges require a concerted effort by all. This underscores the need to continue to provide support to the sector, particularly given the invaluable role that bees play for agriculture and the environment.