

BR Hills Wild Bee Honey Cluster Chamarajanagara District, Karnataka

About the cluster: The BR Hills Wild Bee Honey cluster is a collective comprising 560 honey harvesters, including 51 females. B R Hills is situated in southeastern Karnataka at its border with Tamil Nadu in South India and located at a confluence of both Western Ghats and Eastern Ghats which is rich in biodiversity. The cluster is in the vicinity of a tiger reserve called BR Hills Tiger Reserve.

The cluster covers an area of 1,445 square km of dense forest, which is home to the tribal community's (Soligas) economic living from Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) such as honey, amla, soap nut, soap-berry, lichen etc. The harvesters are part of the cooperative society "Shree Biligiri Rangaswamy Soligara Samskara Sangha", set up in 2018.

India is endowed with 4 species of native honey bees namely *Apis dorsata*, *Apis cerana*, *Apis florea*, and *Trigona Iridipennis*. Among the above four, giant bee, *A. dorsata* are incredible pollinators. Twenty percent of the honey marketed in India comes from rock bees. They live in the open forming a cluster around a single comb. They are known for their aggressiveness and for higher honey yield.

Based on the area under cultivation in India and bee forage crops, India has a potential to have about 200 million bee colonies while the current figure is about 3.4 million colonies. The number of bee colonies maintained by bee-keepers in India is on the rise. It was 34 lakh in 2018. The Southern states account for about 25 % of the honey produced in India that is obtained from the Indian bees, *Apis Cerana*, and the rock bees *Apis Dorsata*.

Honey from *Apis Cerana Indica* is available throughout the year while honey from *Apis Florea* is available from October to December.

Agro-Business Cluster, Nagaland: The bees found in the Kiphire district are *Apis Cerana* and *Trigona/Melipona* (Stingless Bee).