



## **Pollination Pricing for 2023**

The Western Cape Bee Industry Association, the WCBA, is not issuing a recommended tariff this year for members hiring out their beehives for the pollination of agricultural crops.

The WCBA has, instead, advised its members to negotiate individually with farmers. Last year, the recommended tariff was set at R1121 per hive (plus VAT).

Despite the decision not to issue the usual pricing guideline beekeepers continue to face spiraling cost increases, like all sectors of agriculture.

The main input costs for beekeepers are transport (60-70%), wages (20%), maintenance and equipment (5-10%) and supplementary feed for bees (5-10%). All these have risen sharply in the past year.

The price of fuel, which has increased by an average 12.4%, is especially onerous as beekeepers in the Western Cape are being forced to travel ever increasing distances to find suitable sites to sustain their bees outside the pollination season because of the worsening forage crisis. Wages have also risen sharply at 9.6% and supplementary bee feed at 7%.

Preparing suitable honeybee colonies for agricultural pollination is both immensely time-consuming and requires considerable beekeeping skill. The provision of bees for pollination is a professional service and should be recognized as such during deliberations between beekeeper and farmer.

The WCBA, therefore, appeals to all farmers requiring pollination to ensure that they contract only registered beekeepers with demonstrable experience in the provision of such a service. In the past year, the WCBA received a record number of complaints from farmers about honeybee colonies of inferior standard being supplied for pollination.

Pollinating beekeepers, who belong to the WCBA, are obliged to conform to its pollination standards. In the past, the WCBA has urged farmers to familiarize themselves with the criteria by visiting the WCBA website. It has also been recommended that farmers enter into a proper contract with the beekeeper, which clearly stipulates the WCBA's recommended standards, based on the latest scientific advice from the Agricultural Research Council and the expertise of leading pollinating beekeepers.

The WCBA's pollination standards are currently being reviewed to ensure that they remain up to date, including the establishment of a formal pollination inspection service to act in the event of a dispute between beekeeper and farmer.

The WCBA is committed to excellence in the provision of pollination services in our province. This includes setting an exacting standard of professionalism for our member beekeepers, as well as ensuring the humane handling and treatment of the bees that perform this crucial service.

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