

Youth Entrepreneurship - Honeybees

The Situation

Entrepreneurship activity makes up a significant portion of our national economy, yet according to the U.S. Small Business Administration, 50% of small businesses fail within the first five years. Reasons cited for this failure include lack of experience and poor management. Family farm businesses are no exception. They are being passed down to succeeding generations who do not know enough about running a business to effectively continue the operation. A contributing factor to this may be that rural youth have limited opportunities to learn the skills needed to start and run a successful business.

Extension Response

Youth aged 9-12 years old were provided an opportunity to start a "real" business in order to learn and hone business knowledge and skills. Using beekeeping as the business venture; hives, bees, and equipment were provided to facilitate the business start-up.

The youth were taught the basics starting with raising bees in a new hive. They learned feeding, veterinary tasks and harvesting as well as marketing and budgeting.

Basic business topics were taught at appropriate times of the year starting with budgeting. Once the products were harvested, the youth were taught how to calculate cost of production and market price; the difference between gross and net income.

The program will be expanded in 2011 to allow for additional 4-H youth to participate.

Impacts

The participating youth have a solid understanding of the process of honey production in a hive. Topics learned include:

- Basic honeybee anatomy
- Diseases of honeybees including parasites
- Honeybee behavior
- Techniques to control a hive
- Harvesting
- Packaging
- Marketing

Two members of the program are making plans for their own hives and wish to begin their own ventures.

An unexpected impact was that prior to the start of this program, the public were quite wary of honeybees and ordinances were passed banning hives from the community. Once members of the community saw that youth, as young as nine years old, can work with a bee hive without ill effect, they began to change their views on honeybees, even though the ordinances are still in effect.

Feedback

"The boys were very interested in the process of honey making, from the bees to the jar. Also they benefited from telling the story when they marketed the honey, so that the customers knew what they had done and more about the honey itself. They had a lot of fun and want to do it again next year and maybe have a hive of their own." - Parent, 2010

"It was pretty fun, I enjoyed extracting Hunnie [*sic*], wearing the suit, and checking the beehives. It was weird when the bees became mad and stuck up their backsides." - Youth, 2010

"I enjoyed learning about the bees, so I have decided to take an entrepreneur project for 4-H." - Youth, 2010

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