

National Apiculture Programme 2007-2010

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food administers Ireland's National Apiculture Programme 2007-2010. Funding of up to €267,000 will be provided over the 3-year duration of this competitive public good research programme. The European Union (EU) will co-fund €245,500 of this amount on a 50:50 basis. Because the planned spread of expenditure over the programme had to be adjusted slightly, a balance of €21,500 in Years 2 and 3 is not eligible for EU co-funding and will be paid instead as a State aid.

There are approximately 2,200 beekeepers in Ireland who maintain an estimated 20,000-22,000 hives. Apart from the positive effects these bees have in maintaining Irish bio-diversity and crop production, they produce 200-300 tonnes of honey annually. Irish honey is recognised as a high-quality product that commands premium prices. Direct sales to consumers account for a significant proportion of Ireland's annual production of honey.

There are a number of endemic bee pests and diseases affecting honey production. The *Varroa* mite is the most serious pest of the honeybee; it can cause death to large colony numbers and eliminate wild bee populations. *Varroa* has been prevalent in Ireland since the late 1990s.

The Department received EU approval on 10 August 2007 for the National Apiculture Programme 2007-2010. The principal aims of this Programme are to:

- (1) develop protocols for integrated methods of control of *Varroa* in Ireland;
- (2) advance disease control, especially the integrated methods of control of *Varroa*, in an applied research environment and
- (3) provide technical assistance and disseminate information on good practice to the beekeeping communities.

The Department invited programme proposals from suitable research institutions for a scientific programme of work based on, and to achieve the objectives of, the National Apiculture Programme. All suitable institutions that could demonstrate the necessary research capabilities, including Universities, Institutes of Technology and Teagasc, were eligible to submit proposals. Projects that involved collaboration between institutions and/or involved the development of critical mass were encouraged. The closing date for receipt of completed applications was Monday 17 September 2007. Applications were subjected to a full review by an independent Expert Panel appointed by the Department. Following that evaluation, University of Limerick was awarded the funding to carry out the Programme.

The results of the research will be made available on this area of our website following completion of the Programme.

Further information on the National Apiculture Programme can be obtained by contacting:

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