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Raising public awareness of the importance of bees and apicultural products has an important role in the effort to protect bees and beekeeping sector. Thus we contribute to poverty alleviation, hunger eradication and preserving healthy environment and its biodiversity.

The Slovenian Beekeepers' Association, with the support of **the Republic of Slovenia**, proposes to the United Nations that

May 20th is declared as **WORLD BEE DAY**



The importance of bees

For ensuring food security in the world

Bees and other pollinators are very important for human survival as they substantially contribute to the world's food security. One third of produced food in the world depends on pollination and bees play the most important role among the pollinators. Every third spoon of world food depends on pollination.

In addition, they also contribute to nutrition security with their highly nutritious products such as honey, royal jelly, and pollen. Food products that depend on pollinators contribute to a healthy diet, providing a rich source of essential nutrients.

For sustainable agriculture

With pollination, bees contribute to successful agricultural production. Pollination-dependent crops are an important source of income for farmers, and particularly for small-holders and family farms in developing countries. They also provide jobs and income for millions of people. According to the international study of Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) in 2016 between US\$ 235 billion and US\$ 577 billion of annual global food production relies on direct contributions by pollinators.

For the environment

With their activity, bees have positive effects on the whole ecosystem and on the conservation of biodiversity in nature. Biodiversity is essential for maintaining the natural habitat and thus humanity itself. It provides food, fuel, oxygen, cleans water and air, stabilises the weather and climate, increases the ability to adapt to changes, creates and renews soil fertility, detoxifies and breaks down waste products, pollinates plants, including many crops, controls pests and diseases in



agricultural crops, maintains genetic resources that are crucial for the development of new varieties, medicines and other products, and enables cultural and aesthetic benefits. Bees are also a good bioindicator of environmental conditions. Through observation of their development and health status, we can determine when something is happening in the environment and if there is a need to take action. If we do not react to these warnings, the later consequences may be even worse.

Endangerment of pollinators

In the recent period, especially in areas with intensive agriculture, bees are increasingly endangered due to environmental threats. Their habitat is shrinking and the conditions for their survival and development are getting worse and worse. There are fewer and fewer nectar-bearing areas due to increasing monocultures and modified and intensified technology for grassland processing that provide the necessary food for bees only for short periods of time and with significantly less diversity than in the past. Following this, we are witnessing poorer development of bee colonies. In addition to this condition, there are also new bee diseases and pests, resulting from the reduced resistance of bee colonies' and from globalisation, which supports the transmission of pests over long distances.

May 20th – World Bee Day

We propose to celebrate World Bee Day in May, which in the northern hemisphere is the month with the greatest activity in the growth of bees when, the number of bee colonies increases to such an extent that the colonies swarm, which is their natural way of reproduction. During this period, bees are most numerous and the need for pollination is at its maximum. In the southern hemisphere on the other hand, it is autumn time, the time for harvesting products, and thus the days and weeks of honey.

May 20th is the day when Anton Janša was born (1734-1773). He is known as a pioneer of modern beekeeping and one of the greatest experts on bees of the time. He was the first modern beekeeping teacher in the world, and Holy Roman Empress Maria Theresa of Austria named him a permanent teacher of beekeeping at the new Beekeeping School in Vienna. The world beekeeping expert A.G. Schirach also supported his nomination.

His contribution to the beginning of modern beekeeping is of paramount importance. It is collected in two books: *Abhandlung vom Schwärmen der Bienen* and in *Vollständige Lehre von der Bienenzucht*.

He became famous even before his death in 1773. After 1775, all the state beekeeping teachers had to teach beekeeping following Anton Janša's teachings.

His life and work are described in many beekeeping books, including *The World History of Beekeeping* and *Honey Hunting* (Eva Craine, 1999).



Why Slovenia?

Slovenians have always been a nation of beekeepers. There are five beekeepers per 1,000 inhabitants, which places Slovenia at the top of the world in terms of beekeepers per head of population. Beekeeping is an important agricultural activity with a long tradition. Our beekeepers are known throughout the world for their professionalism and advanced beekeeping technologies and for Slovenia's unique historical peculiarities, such as painted beehive panels, bee houses and traditional beehives, of course the reputation of the Carniolan honeybee going before it!

The bee, in particular Carniolan honey bee, *Apis mellifera carnica*, indigenous Slovenian race of bee, which is the second most widespread bee race in the world, is part of Slovenian national identity. Moreover, Slovenia is the only country in the EU that protected its bee by legal means.

Key promotional activities, implemented so far

»Bee World« interactive pavilion

One of the key elements of global campaign to declared World Bee Day is »Bee World« interactive pavilion, which was visited by several thousands visitors around the globe.

It has the form of a cupola 6 m in diameter and with a height of 3.1 m, consisting of wooden hexagons and symbolising bee cells, which are united and form a honeycomb.

At the pavilion, one can come to know the world of bees through: virtual reality, by listening to the sound of buzzing bees, experiencing a real beehive through the genuine smell of propolis, and many other interesting things – all by means of modern technology.

European Honey Breakfast

The Slovenian initiative to introduce a "European Honey Breakfast" is based on the project Honey Breakfast that started in Slovenia seven years ago when the Slovenian beekeepers offered their honey for breakfast to kindergarten and school children for the first time. In the context of this annual education and promotion action various presentations and workshops are organised to bring the importance of bees for our food supply closer to children, with emphasis on maintaining clean and healthy environment and rural areas. The focus is also on raising awareness of other target audiences about the role of breakfast as an important daily meal for healthy lifestyle.



Do you know that...

- Bees pollinate as many as 170,000 species of plants.
- Without bees, there would not be so many different kinds of fruits and vegetables, or such beautiful colours on the lawn.
- Every third spoon of world food depends on pollination.
- Bees and other pollinators substantially contribute to the world's food security. Pollination is worth annually between US\$ 235 billion and US\$ 577 billion.
- A bee colony is as big as a small town. There are from 30,000 to 60,000 bees in each colony.
- The queen bee is the only one that lays eggs. She lays up to 2,000 eggs per day.
- Out of 20,000 species of bees, only one is widely used for commercial honey production.
- Honey bees' wings stroke 11,400 times per minute, thus making their distinctive buzz.
- Honey bees are the only bees that die after they sting.
- To make one kilogram of honey, the bees have to visit 4 million flowers and fly four times the distance around the world.



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