

## Farmers' organizations serving farmers and rural territories

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### STUDY TRIPS AND EXPERT MISSIONS: KEY TOOLS IN SUPPORTING PARTNER FARMERS' ORGANIZATIONS

As an agri-agency and a member of the AgriCord alliance, Fert is committed to mobilizing the professional know-how in agricultural organization held by farmers, members and leaders, and by the technicians employed by these organizations. This mobilization is a principle at the heart of the approach, a tool at the service of action in the field, and not an end in itself. For Fert, the mobilization of this know-how is not limited to professional agricultural organizations (the mobilized organizations can have various statuses: consultancy firm, agri-food companies, agricultural training centers ...) and is done in different ways. This newsletter focuses on two recent mobilizations, organized as part of the support of Fert's partner FOs.

ALGERIA



#### Testimony of Anap animator, after her study trip to France

In 2015, a small group of Algerian professional beekeepers, committed to responsible and quality beekeeping at the national level, created the National Association of Professional Beekeepers - Anap. In 2018, in order to lead its technical projects and its associative life, the young organization recruited an animator. To enhance her skills, Anap and its French partners decided to organize a study trip to France for her. The trip was supervised by Adapi (Association pour le Développement de l'Apiculture Provençale) and Fert.



After two weeks spent between September and October 2019 meeting French collective beekeeping structures, Meriem Hammal, the animator of Anap, testifies.

**Fert:** *It was your first trip to France, what were your expectations beforehand?*

**Meriem Hammal (MH):** This trip was above all an opportunity to meet other people doing the same work as me. In Algeria, there are few farmers' organizations and even fewer animators, at least not to my knowledge. Being able to exchange with my counterparts, in some cases my peers, about their daily lives, the management of problems and their relationship with leaders was a good way to find answers to some of my questions.

Then, since Anap is currently reflecting on the notion of quality of Algerian honeys, beekeeping practices and product features, it was interesting to understand the experiences of different French beekeeping structures (groups, unions and cooperatives) in the implementation of a quality approach.

**Fert:** *What do you remember from these 17 days spent in France? What surprised you?*

**MH:** I could meet several stakeholders of the French beekeeping sector: beekeepers, cooperatives and producers' groups, trade unions, researchers and packers. To summarize this long trip and these numerous encounters, I found the French honey industry very organized with a diversity and complementarity of stakeholders from the hive to the consumer.

First, I was surprised by the similarity of problems faced by French beekeepers compared to Algerian beekeepers, i.e. unfair competition from imported honey, deterioration in the health of bee population and climate change.

I was also astonished by the ability of collective beekeeping structures, led by beekeepers, to sit around the table to analyze the difficulties and to imagine and implement solutions, and more specifically the importance of well-qualified animators whose role is to coordinate activities and support leaders in their missions.

On the technical level, I discovered and understood how several quality approaches had been implemented, via different quality signs from private label to PGI. This understanding was completed by my participation in control and analysis processes, among beekeepers and packers on the PGI "miel de Provence" and the brand "Gelée Royale Française".

I note that these approaches and processes are demanding but remain within the reach of beekeepers. In addition, **to work and raise consumers' trust, quality approaches are based on the good will of the stakeholders, and in the first place, the beekeepers.**



**Fert:** *What will you do when you get back?*

**MH:** First of all, I have a lot of paperwork waiting for me!

I realize that the convergence of interests is the key to seek progress within a farmers' organization such as Anap, and to encourage the commitment of leaders and members. This is a fundamental point to work with Anap leaders, because some projects have been designed and started with too many actors with different objectives.

I also think I can see more clearly now, on how to set up a quality approach and its implications in Algeria and what roadmap to imagine. It seems obvious to me that some Algerian honeys have the potential to move upmarket, such as jujube, euphorbia or wild carrot honeys.

Other elements still need to be considered for the future, in particular the evolution of our association, its needs in human resources and its capacity to evolve in the same direction as the French structures I visited.





## Testimony of an engineer from DEFIS (IRC-Montpellier SupAgro), after his mission to SMSA Zed Elkhir



In 2017, a few farmers from SMSA Zed Elkhir (mutual society of agricultural services - cooperative type) and the SMSA itself started a pilot experiment on "camel milk": organize joint camel care, milk camels in lactation and sell the milk. This experience attracted Prodefil, an IFAD-funded sector support programme coordinated by the CRDA, which decided to support the SMSA in this experiment. Difficulties in awarding contracts delayed the support, but 50 lactating camels were provided between May and September 2019 to 5 beneficiary farmers, and the construction of the collection center that will be used by the SMSA should be completed by the end of 2019.

Fert assisted the SMSA during its pilot experiment in 2017 and has continued its support in 2018 and 2019, particularly in terms of training and technical support provision to farmers who initiated the dairy production.

In September 2019, a mission of Laurent Roy from DEFIS department of IRC-Montpellier SupAgro was also organized to support the SMSA in the organization of its collection service: it was meant to address the level of breeders and their post milking management, as well as the operation system of the center and milk marketing.

He testifies: "This mission raised many questions that had not yet been considered by farmers and SMSA's leaders.

Beyond the organization of the collection center and the choices to be made regarding collection methods, ..., the SMSA must also consider its support system for the development of dairy production. Let me explain: in 2019, 5 farmers received 10 dairy camels each, benefited from training for dairy herd management, milking, etc. What will be done in 2020, taking, as well, into account the fact that these camels will only produce again in 2021 ...? Moreover, in the absence of a running collection center, these farmers had to put together, from 2019 onwards, to sell the milk they produced. While building the collection service, the SMSA must therefore be careful about the advantages to provide, over pre-existing marketing channels, and secure the viability of the collection center, particularly financially.

These are just some of the issues raised during the mission. SMSA must now develop its business plan, reflect on its support plan, monitor the work of the collection center, ensure good partnership conditions with the CRDA regarding the provision of the center, define specifications for the milk collected, prepare to negotiate its markets ... Given these important needs and challenges, Fert, in partnership with DEFIS, will most probably continue to support them.

Obviously, **there is a lot to prepare, but there are many positive elements**: on one side the 5 farmers are ready to continue dairy production, SMSA will identify other farmers (and it seems that there are already some interested farmers), and on the other side, there are actors - milk processors and traders - ready to commit themselves to market camel milk because consumer demand on the market is higher than the existing supply."



Cette lettre d'information est réalisée par l'association Fert ([www.fert.fr](http://www.fert.fr)) et ses partenaires locaux. L'action est cofinancée par :

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