



JÚLIA MARTINOVIČOVÁ

Family with 200 beehives producing honey and honey products with a story and a value added.

Identification details:

Name: Júlia Martinovičová

Location: Liptovské Revúce, Slovakia

Farm size: -

Year established: 2015

Main activities: beekeeping

Web / Facebook / Twitter: N/A

Júlia Martinovičová has been working in beekeeping since she was 12 years old. She was brought to this craft by her grandad, who devoted himself to bees at the end of his life as a hobby beekeeper. Subsequently, she brought her husband to beekeeping, who is a trained zoo technician and wanted to engage in farming, but due to the fact that there is no spatial background – especially pastures, he also decided to work with bees. Later, when the opportunity arised, they moved from hobby beekeeping to more professional work.

They use land only for the location of apiaries and do not cultivate it. These apiaries are currently located in several places in Dolný Liptov, while the honey house and beekeeping workshop are located in Liptovské Revúce. Characteristic for this area is the production of mountain honeys, whether floral (from raspberry or meadow flowers) or highly valued honeydew. Because there is no intensively farmed area, honeys are very clean and of high quality.

Support from the European Structural Funds' rural development program to help young farmers starting out has made a significant contribution to the establishment of the farm. They were able to expand the farm from the original 5 beehives to the current almost 200. Compared to other bee farms, which are heavily engaged in honey production, Julia's farm is still a small family business, but what makes them specific is that there is a great connection between the farm and its end customers. They participated in the adopt the hive project and later developed their own adoption program. Because of this, almost every hive on the farm has its adopter, which helps not only to increase the added value of products, but also to ensure their sale. By connecting a farmer with a customer on an almost friendly basis, they know very well who they are producing their honey for and customers know them, too. This also contributes to greater transparency and trustworthiness in the quality of products. In addition to several permanent sites, they are also building facilities in the form of a small honey house, packing house and beekeeping workshop. Their activities are also complemented by educational activities, various programs for schools and families, which are not

directly agricultural activities, but contribute to the dissemination of their good name and the successfulness of their products on the market.

Since the original intention to produce honey and other bee products in the traditional way, they have also had to reorient themselves (given the honey and products are from a mountain area where honey yields are several times lower compared to the south of Slovakia). They started thinking about how to give their products a story and added value. Although, for example, honeydew honey is marketed at a slightly higher price than rapeseed, due to lower production, this price difference never compensates for the losses caused by the geographical area in which they operate. Therefore, from traditional beekeeping they have to focus much more on working directly with their acquired or potential customers.

As for cooperation with other farmers and farms, this cooperation is mainly at the level of exchanging experiences or promoting common interests. Júlia is a member of ASYF, also member of the Slovak Association of Beekeepers, and they actively communicate with each other in both associations within the membership base.

Their farm is a family-type farm. Beside Júlia and her husband, Júlia's mother-in-law, mother and brother are also partially involved in the farm and they employ a close family friend, too. In addition, other family members participate mainly in seasonal work. Júlia and her husband try to instill love for bees in their son, who also actively helps on the farm as much as possible. If he is interested in taking over family farm, he will have good starting conditions.

The farm is still in a state of turbulent development. Some processes, both production and marketing, need to be stabilized. In the future, they want to create conditions for nomadism and also for the secondary processing of raw materials. Also, they want to create, for example, own brand of mead and honey beer, as well as honey cosmetics and honey mixed with herbs or fruits.

Photos:

