



Miel de Mixtepec is a cooperative that gathers, processes, and commercializes organic honey from small beekeepers in Oaxaca, in the San Gabriel Mixtepec municipality. The cooperative was established in 2011 to improve the livelihood of beekeepers in the region. San Gabriel Mixtepec is the second major honey region in Oaxaca. By encouraging beekeeping, Miel de Mixtepec also ensures pollination of local flora, including squash and pumpkin.

Miel de Mixtepec’s honey is sold locally to distributors that export it to the US and Europe. The cooperative currently has five clients. Miel de Mixtepec benefits 200 households, of which 35% are indigenous and 20% are women. The indigenous communities it works with are Chatina, Zapotec, and Mixtec.

IMPACT OVERVIEW

Improving the livelihood of beekeepers and honey producers	
No. of beneficiaries	200 families
% Women	20%

COMMUNITY

	Country: Mexico
	Municipalities: San Gabriel Mixtepec, Oaxaca
	Communities: Chatina, Mixteco and Zapoteca

The Chatina live mainly in the coastal region of Oaxaca, and its culture has existed since 400 BC. Its religious beliefs are based on worshipping the sun and the earth for prosperity in the harvests and blessing for the living and the dead. Their cosmology has the human being in the center, considering its interdependence with everything else. The Chatinos’ principal economic activity is agriculture, sowing crops such as coffee, avocado, mango, maize, and beans, among others¹. On the other hand, Zapotecs originated around 5,000 BC, being one of the oldest indigenous communities on the continent. Its religious beliefs are also based on the sun, rain, and fertility, with Catholicism incorporated during the Spanish conquest. The Zapotecs’ main economic activity is agriculture, with some of them also dedicated to livestock². Finally, the Mixtec is one of the oldest pre-Columbian cultures, predominant in the southern part of the country. Its most thriving period was around the Xth century, but it declined later in the XVth century after the Spanish conquest. The Mixtec families mostly live on their farms, and there are villages with family groups living scattered over the countryside. All indigenous groups affiliated with Miel de Mixtepec generate most of their income from farming, concentrating on honey, maize, beans, chile, cacao, squash, and cotton. Bees pollination benefits food production, quantity, and quality for some of these crops.

¹ [Chatinos: Atlas de los pueblos indígenas, 2020.](#)

² [Etnografía del pueblo zapoteco del Istmo de Tehuantepec: Gobierno de Mexico, 2017.](#)

Miel de Mixtepec provides technical assistance to its beekeeper members to ensure good honey production, processing, and packaging practices. The cooperative buys honey from small beekeepers at a fair price (around 20-25% over the market price). It secures quality by processing it in its facility, later sold in bulk in 200L containers. The organization also provides queen bees and equipment for beekeepers. The honey processing plant was built from 2016 to 2018 with its resources (USD 23,350). Miel de Mixtepec designates part of its profits to maintain the organic certificate (first obtained in 2019) and to improve the honey processing plant and laboratory. The plant received the Good Practices for Honey Production certificate in 2020.

In 2022, the organization collected and processed the most significant honey volume in its history, representing almost 350 tons. Honey production has two seasons per year, depending on the honey. Multiflora honey is collected from March to April, with an average collection of 200 tons. Campanita honey, the most desired and profitable, is collected from November to February, with an average collection of 180 tons. Beehive preservation and care enhances grains and fruit pollination, critical for the ecosystem equilibrium.

Impact Background

Oaxaca has a poverty rate of almost 64%, making it the fourth poorest state in Mexico³, with over 70% living in rural areas⁴. Most of its population is dedicated to agriculture, livestock, and fishing⁵. San Gabriel de Mixtepec is the second largest honey producer in Oaxaca State, with most of its produce exported to the US and Europe⁶. Mexico has identified over 43,000 beekeepers among 508 associations and cooperatives⁷. Mexico consumes around half of its total production. In 2021, the production was 63,000 tons, and the exports were valued at USD 67.9M.



Miel de Mixtepec approached Beneficial Returns because it wants to develop direct relationships with international clients rather than sell through intermediaries. Since 2021, Mexico has been implementing a national conservation and sustainable honey production strategy, meaning that the country acknowledges an excellent opportunity for this product in the global markets and supports beekeepers and farmers to achieve it. Miel de Mixtepec beekeepers have over 20 years of experience in the activity.

SVX, an impact-consulting firm, provides Miel de Mixtepec with no-cost technical assistance in management, commercialization, and finance to improve the organization's capacities. Regarding commercialization, SVX hired Minkadev, an organization that facilitates commercial agreements between associations and cooperatives with the private sector. Minkadev helped Miel de Mixtepec close a deal with a large restaurant chain in Mexico called TOKS. The restaurant will purchase at least 24,000L of honey yearly, representing MXN 1,440,000 (USD 80k) in revenue for the organization. During Q4 2023, the organization will sell 200L of honey to TOKS to start the relationship. BR confirmed these details with Gustavo Perez of TOKS, responsible for sourcing from social enterprises. Minkadev is committed to searching for business opportunities for the organization in the local and international markets.

³ [Informe Anual sobre la situación de pobreza y rezago social en Oaxaca: Gobierno de México, 2023.](#)

⁴ [Pobreza en el campo y la ciudad en tres estados de Oaxaca: Gobierno del Estado de Oaxaca.](#)

⁵ [Oaxaca: Gobierno de México, 2023.](#)

⁶ [Productores de Oaxaca exportan miel orgánica en países europeos: Gobierno de México, 2015.](#)

⁷ [Crecen producción y exportaciones de miel en México al cierre de 2021: Gobierno de México, 2022.](#)

Impact Delivery

Miel de Mixtepec provides technical assistance to 200 beekeepers (households) that manage over 40,000 beehives to improve quality and gradually increase the number of beehives they own. The organization gathers honey from the beekeepers to be processed in its facility and sold to national clients. These clients are distributors that sell honey in the international markets. Miel de Mixtepec has five main clients that purchase almost all the production and with whom they have a relationship of more than seven years. To maintain high prices for its honey, Miel de Mixtepec obtained organic certification, “Coral” brand registration, and a Good Practices in Honey production certificate. These initiatives have secured better honey prices, translating into a higher income for beekeepers.

In 2022, Miel de Mixtepec produced around 350 tons of honey and paid beekeepers MXN 22.5M (USD 1.2M) for this volume. Each producer was paid MXN 112,500 (USD 6,200) for 1.75 tons, which works out to MX 63 (USD 3.5) per kilo. The minimum monthly salary in Mexico is around MXN 5,200 (USD 280). Miel de Mixtepec members earn almost 2X the minimum monthly wage from their beekeeping activities, comparing the yearly minimum salary to what they generate from beekeeping.

Technical assistance also has a valuable impact, not only for beekeepers but also for farmers in the region. Pollination processes are necessary in the area for crops to develop, the most relevant being coffee, nuts, avocado, maize, and fruit trees. The organization wants to commercialize other honey subproducts that the market demands, such as honey jelly and propolis, to increase beekeepers’ income.



The organization has established four central committees, each composed of a leader and other members. The committees manage administrative processes, infrastructure maintenance and upgrades, quality control, and governance. The plant upgrades are critical to increasing beekeepers' income as they sell the produce to local clients, sacrificing better margins if they could sell it directly to international clients. Miel de Mixtepec leader, Itzel Venegas, has strong managerial and administrative capacities and is working towards building partnerships to develop the export business.

Outcome

Improvement of livelihood

- Provides indigenous and non-indigenous beekeepers technical assistance in honey production and commercialization for national and international markets.
- Ensures that small beekeepers receive fair compensation for their produce and provides necessary inputs at cost to develop the activity.

Environmental preservation

- Beehive preservation and care enhances vegetable, nut, and fruit pollination, critical for the ecosystem equilibrium.
- Honey production is organic and doesn’t apply harmful chemicals to the environment and humans.