

## Beekeeping in Europe: challenges, sustainability, and the meeting point of APIMELL

European apiculture today lies at the centre of a delicate balance between agricultural production, environmental protection, and sustainability policies. According to the **2025 report by the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS)**, the European Union is home to more than **20 million beehives**, managed by **around 600,000 beekeepers**. Despite this, honey production—estimated at around **275,000 tons per year**—covers only **60% of internal demand**, leaving Europe heavily dependent on imports.

### Figures and trends in the sector

The European beekeeping sector is highly fragmented: most beekeepers own fewer than 50 hives, while only a small percentage (about 4%) run professional operations.

Among the leading honey producers are **Spain, Romania, Hungary, Germany, and Italy**. These countries account for the majority of intra-EU exports and innovations related to honey quality.

The EPRS highlights that, in addition to its economic importance, apiculture plays a crucial role in **biodiversity and food security**: more than 80% of cultivated plants in Europe depend directly on pollination by bees.

### The challenges: climate, fraud, and global competition

Among the main risks identified by the European Parliament are:

- the **rising mortality rate of bees** due to pesticides, parasites, and climate change;
- **food fraud** and the adulteration of imported honey, often mixed with sugars or labelled in a non-transparent way;
- **competitive pressure** from low-cost honey;
- the **need to harmonize national policies** and strengthen supply-chain traceability.

To address these issues, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) supports the sector through the **2023–2027 apiculture program**, which allocates more than **180 million euros** for research, training, and innovation.

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## APIMELL: the home of European beekeeping

In this context, **APIMELL** continues to be an essential point of reference for the sector.

Held every year in **Piacenza**, APIMELL is the **International Trade Fair of Beekeeping, Apiary Products and Equipment**—the most important in Southern Europe. The exhibition is organized by Piacenza Expo.

The event brings together producers, technicians, research institutions, and beekeepers from all over Europe, offering:

- displays of machinery, hives, and technologies for sustainable production;
- scientific conferences on bee health, traceability, and honey quality;
- tastings and dedicated areas showcasing regional honeys and hive products (propolis, royal jelly, wax).

APIMELL is also a political and cultural forum where crucial issues are discussed, such as **label transparency**, the **fight against fraud**, and the integration of **beekeeping traditions** with **technological innovation**.

European apiculture is undergoing a period of transformation: amid the risks of the global market and the need to preserve ecosystems, bees are becoming sentinels of environmental health. Fairs such as **APIMELL** are not only commercial showcases but true laboratories of ideas for a future in which honey, the environment, and sustainability can coexist in balance.

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### APIMELL

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Piacenza, Italy

[www.apimell.it](http://www.apimell.it)

### Main sources:

- European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), “*Apiculture sector in the European Union – 2025 update*”, European Parliament, 2025.
- APIMELL – International Beekeeping Exhibition and Market.
- Eurostat – Beehives on agricultural holdings 2020.
- European Commission – Apiculture sector reports.