



## *Diversifying The Farm Income – What About Bees?*

Honey bees produce honey and play a vital role in the balance of nature. Bees are especially important for pollinating agricultural and horticultural crops and the house garden. So why not keep a few hives on the farm? Pollination is important for the viability of many pastoral enterprises, market gardens, orchards and seed industries and honey bees are estimated to add \$1.6 billion to the Australian agricultural and horticultural industries. Gabe Brown in the US says that bees give one of the best returns when adding another income stream on your farm. Before you start though, check out your local rules as there are safety standards and minimum requirements of beekeeping, the most obvious one providing a good source of water.

### **Here's ONE way to get a return on your bees – Farmer's Markets.**

If you're a beekeeper at the market, you want to make sure your booth will attract and keep customers' attention so you can increase your sales, share information, and keep customers engaged. Read on for 4 suggestions to improve your booth at farmers' markets.

*Note: You may ask another stall holder to sell for you.*

**1. Draw customers with good visuals.** - Lot of visual aids and interesting items at your booth will draw potential customers in for a look. You can have a live example of a hive by bringing a plexiglass or glass honeybee hive. This allows people to observe a frame or two of nurse bees at work behind the safety of the glass and is a great conversation starter for you to explain your apiary and your products. Another option is to have a "Recipe of the Week" that you can make into a poster for your table. Print out a few extra copies to hand out to buyers, and let them know they can pick up a different recipe the next time, even without buying more honey. You're providing options for them to use their honey. Try to find some that work with different fruits or vegetables that people might be buying at the market.

You can also have other products made from honey, such as candles, soaps, lip balms, and lotions, which increase the diversity of your sales and they are popular sales items. If you don't make them yourself, join into an arrangement with another beekeeper that does produce them. Make sure if you're selling on that person's behalf that you try each product so you know them well and can discuss each with your customers.

**2. Authentic Products** - Be sure to clearly mark and label your bee products and be very open and honest about what goes in them and your process to make them. Customers love to know what's in their food and they're increasingly interested in how they're made. You may be asked if your product is organic or local or where the bees gathered the pollen. Put labels on your jars that say this. What's almost as important as the honey is the jars themselves. Make sure you've filled them properly, try to offer different size jars, and consider offering wooden honey dippers along with them for attractive looking gifts. Bear-shaped jars are quite popular, as are inverted plastic jars which reduce the messiness of honey.

**3. Samples** - Find if you're allowed to give small samples. It can be as simple as having small wooden sticks and a jar; and keep water and a cloth nearby to handle drips.

**4. Entertain the Kids** - Farmers' markets are popular with families, and parents will appreciate booths that can also entertain their kids maybe with colouring in sheets, simple quizzes. Don't be afraid to try different things and see what works best. The important is to be friendly and engaging and happy to explain your passion for bees to customers at farmers' markets.

***Farming Secrets says: Bees Are An Asset On Your Farm In Many Ways***

*Ref: By Chloe Bennet <https://www.keepingbackyardbees.com>*

Gold Nugget S8#26 – [www.farmingsecrets.com](http://www.farmingsecrets.com)