

# Challenges and Barriers to Commercial Beekeeping Programs in Florida

Matt Bengé, Micah Gallagher, Amy Vu

*University of Florida*

**UF IFAS**  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA



HONEY BEE RESEARCH &  
EXTENSION LABORATORY

**UF IFAS**  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA  
AGRICULTURAL  
EDUCATION AND  
COMMUNICATION

## Needs

- The agriculture industry in Florida heavily relies on the services provided by honey bees and is home to over 520 commercial beekeepers.
- Extension agents need to work closely with these commercial operations to understand their processes.
- Due to this importance, it is critical to understand the barriers and challenges Florida Extension agents face to conducting commercial beekeeping programs

## Methodology

- Program Development Model for the study's conceptual framework.
- The research questions focused on (1) descriptions used regarding commercial beekeeping, (2) challenges to conducting commercial beekeeping programs, and (3) resources and professional development needs of Extension agents to conduct commercial beekeeping programs.
- A focus group was conducted on 11 Extension agents.
- Data was analyzed using NVivo software.

## Findings

- Various definitions were used to describe commercial beekeeping.
- Challenges & Barriers: (a) lack of resources, (b) technical experience, (c) clientele misinformation, (d) state policies and plans of action, (e) lack of trust with Extension from clientele, (f) understanding clientele needs, and (g) other agent job responsibilities take priority demands.
- The resources/professional development needs: (a) standard beekeeping knowledge, (b) commercial beekeeping practices, and (c) commercial beekeepers' needs

## Conclusions

- Themes identified indicated there are program planning concerns within Extension for commercial beekeeping
- Multiple agents stated that they did not know enough about commercial and hobbyist beekeeping
- There is not one standard definition of commercial beekeeping which causes confusion
- UF/IFAS Extension needs to better prepare Extension agents for commercial beekeeping programs, utilizing in-service trainings and hiring agricultural Extension agents with knowledge of beekeeping and its practices.