

## Apple farmers get insight into ‘managed pollination’

Apple farmers from four districts of Himachal Pradesh got valuable practical lessons in managed pollination at the Dr YS Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry. The farmers, who hailed from Shimla, Chamba, Sirmour and Mandi district of the state attended the one-day demonstration camp on the ‘Role of Managed Pollination in Apple Orchards’. The camp was held under the World Bank funded Himachal Pradesh Horticulture Development Project (HPHDP). Fifty-two persons, who are 'contact farmers' and stakeholders in the project attended the camp, along with 12 officers of the Horticulture Department. The nodal officer of the project in the university is Dr JN Sharma, who is also the Director Research of the university.

The university scientists have been part of the project for the past two years. The activity aims to explain the topic of managed pollination. Thorough practical sessions on the preparation of honey bee colony for pollination and the use of pollen dispenser for ensuring proper pollination in apple were organized for the participants, who were all progressive apple growers.



Besides general information about the importance of beekeeping, the farmers also learned about the identification of important insect pollinators and the strategies to conserve them. The main idea was to apprise the farmers on the vital role played by bees and other insect pollinators and motivate them to implement it in their orchards and reap its benefits. Moreover, the farmers were given live demonstration at the university apiary where topics like transportation of bee colonies and bee management were discussed. They also learned how to protect the bees in case there was a need to use spray on the trees/fields. Field visit to the high-density plantations of newly introduced apple varieties under the HPHDP project was also undertaken where the forager behaviour of the bees was explained to the farmers. Dr Anju Khanna, Head, UHF's Department of Entomology explained that the lack of managed pollination especially honey bee colonies was taking a toll on the agricultural output of the state and resulting in poor fruit set and low productivity. This eventually led to the loss of income for farmers.