

VARROA DESTRUCTOR IN AFRICA

By Diana Sammataro

Over the past year or so, there have been many reports indicating that Varroa destructor, the pest that causes serious loss of honeybees, has infiltrated Africa.

First, in 2009, scientists from International Centre for Insect Physiology and Entomology (ICIPE) in Kenya, together with Centre for Chemical Ecology (USA) and Bee Research Laboratory (USA) reported this mite in honeybee colonies in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Ghana. Beekeepers surveyed at the time were neither aware of the mite's presence nor had they observed any negative impact on the survival and/or productivity of their bees. The Fédération Nationale des Apiculteurs Malagasy (FENAM), the Malagasy national apiculture umbrella body also reports that Varroa was officially noticed in Madagascar in February 2009, and until now no curative measures are applied by beekeepers. FENAM further notes that Varroa continues to spread and, in the Analamanga Atsinanana region alone, more than 400 hives have become deserted. Because the government has banned the use of pesticides to treat bees, many beekeepers are destroying countless bee colonies suspected to be infested with Varroa.

Link:

http://www.apitradeafrica.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=90&Itemid=81

Today, a number of Sub Saharan African countries are on the Varroa-suspect list, including Ethiopia (the 10th world's largest honey producer), Zambia (Africa's largest honey exporter), Cameroon, Rwanda, to name just a few. Although there is no scientific basis for this, the list keeps growing and this is not only worrying, but breeds so much anxiety among beekeepers and all of us who support them!