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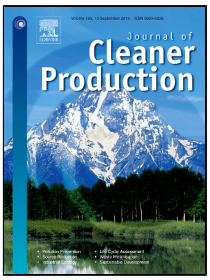

Assessment of social dimension of a jar of hone y: a methodological outline

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Assessment of social dimension of a jar of hone y: a methodological outline

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Abstract

Honey is a natural sweetener that requires minimal industrial technologies and is the subject of thriving markets along with its derived products. It has been estimated that about 35% of food consumption depends directly on the pollination of fruit and vegetable crops. A Social Life Cycle Assessment (S-LCA) case-study is applied in the agro-food sector to assess the social and socio-economic aspects of the life cycle of honey through the Subcategory Assessment Method (SAM). The objectives of this paper are three-fold: i) evaluate the capability of S-LCA to capture the complexity of a multifunctional product, which delivers fundamental ecosystem services with consequences at environmental, economic and social levels; ii) identify how to define and represent, with robust indicators, the positive social aspects generated by honey life cycle; iii) identify the steps to improve the S-LCA methodology, especially for its application to complex product systems, such as the agri-food ones. This paper presents a methodological framework to support decision makers in order to evaluate the social sustainability of the Italian honey sector. The presence of positive social aspects in the life cycle of a jar of honey was highlighted as well as a strong connection between the honey product and local community. Furthermore, a weak relation between suppliers along the entire supply chain emerged. The findings lead to the conclusion that further developments are required in order to improve the assessment of the multifunctional product and to reinforce the awareness of the social sustainability by starting from strong collaborations within the supply chain.

Keywords: Honey, Social Sustainability, Multifunctionality, Semi-qualitative method; Subcategory Assessment Method (SAM), Social Life Cycle Assessment (S-LCA).

Highlights:

- A social and socio-economic assessment of a jar of honey is proposed
- The first application of Social Life Cycle Assessment in the honey sector is carried out
- The evaluation was performed using the Subcategory Assessment Method
- Positive social impacts of honey are observed

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