

NATIONAL OFFICE  
2717 Wentz Avenue  
Saskatoon, SK S7K 4B6  
Ph: (306) 652-9465  
Fax: (306) 664-6226  
E-mail: [nfu@nfu.ca](mailto:nfu@nfu.ca)



**national farmers union**  
*In Union is Strength*

**Protecting Ontario's Pollinators – Who Walked Away from the Discussion, Who Stayed?**  
A Report on the December 18 Agricultural Stakeholder Meeting  
by Ann Slater, National Farmers Union Vice President (Policy)

On December 18, 2014 the National Farmers Union sent two representatives to the Agricultural Stakeholder Engagement meeting on the Ontario government's Pollinator Health proposal. The purpose of the meeting, according to representatives from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the Ministry of the Environment, was to provide an opportunity for farmers and farm organizations to provide input around the key components of the proposed regulation to restrict the use of neonicotinoid-treated corn and soybean seed in Ontario.

The day opened with introductory remarks from Hon. Jeff Leal, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. He reiterated the government's commitment to regulate the use of neonicotinoid-treated seed. After stressing the need for a robust and constructive conversation with the farm community on how to make the regulation practical and workable, he opened the floor to organizations present at the meeting to make their own statements.

The Grain Farmers of Ontario were first to speak. They said that do not agree with the regulatory proposal and will bring forward their own proposal on pollinator health in the new year. Then they walked out of the meeting. The Canadian Seed Trade Association, the organization which represents multinational and small seed companies, indicated their goal is true dialogue but that they also could not participate in the meeting. They left the meeting. Ted Menzies, former MP and the current president of CropLife Canada, a trade organization representing the manufacturers and distributors of pest control products and plant biotechnology, called the proposed regulation an attack on modern agriculture and the rural economy. He expressed concern that CropLife Canada did not have a seat at the table during the development of Ontario's Pollinator Health policy. Mr. Menzies and the other representatives from CropLife Canada walked out of the meeting, as did the representatives from the Association of Equipment Manufacturers, the Ontario Agri Business Association and the Canola Council of Canada.

Representatives from several farm organizations gave statements in support of the proposed Pollinator Health Action Plan (Section A of the proposal) but at the same time they expressed concerns about the provincial government's intent to use a regulatory approach to reduce the use of neonicotinoid-treated corn and soybean seed by 80 percent by 2017. Other than the industry organizations listed above, those in attendance stayed in the meeting to contribute to the dialogue.

In its statement to the Minister, the National Farmers Union (NFU) expressed support for the proposed regulation to reduce the use of neonicotinoid-treated corn and soybean seed while allowing the opportunity to continue to use treated seed to those farmers who can demonstrate the need. The NFU noted that our position is based on research and studies by Canadian public scientists – scientists who are not influenced by the chemical and seed companies that produce and sell neonicotinoids and treated seeds. In particular, we referenced Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency's 2013 conclusion that the current use of neonicotinoid-treated seed in corn and soybeans is not sustainable, as well as research by OMAFRA staff which indicates treated seed only provides insect control benefits on ten to thirty percent of Ontario's corn and

soybean acres.

Valuable dialogue took place on December 18 between various farm organizations and government representatives even though the representatives from agribusiness associations walked out. The government has indicated it will move ahead with a regulatory approach to reduce the use of neonicotinoid seed treatments in an effort to enhance pollinator health.

Farmers need to provide input to make sure the regulation is workable and practical. The National Farmers Union will provide further input to the government on the proposed regulation early next year. We encourage farmers and the public to participate in the consultation process through the EBR Registry (012-3068) or by sending comments to [PollinatorHealth@Ontario.ca](mailto:PollinatorHealth@Ontario.ca).

*Ann Slater is the National Farmers Union Vice President (Policy). She can be reached at 519-349-2448 or [aslater@quadro.net](mailto:aslater@quadro.net).*