



## Ontario Beekeepers Tell the House Bees are Still Threatened

**In a letter to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-food Hearing on Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) proposal to phase out the main uses of imidacloprid, the Ontario Beekeepers' Association warned committee members that the threat to Ontario bees and the Ontario beekeeping industry from neonicotinoid pesticides like Imidacloprid continues despite the initiation of legislation in Ontario.**

Ontario also grows almost 37% of Canada's fresh fruit and vegetables. Most of these farm products require insect pollinators. Therefore the health of Ontario's bees and all insect pollinators should be of prime importance for anyone concerned about Canada's food security.

More than 65% of all the corn and soy grown in Canada is grown in Ontario. The broad application of neonicotinoid pesticides like Imidacloprid on field crops has been linked by PMRA to the decline in bee populations in Ontario. Bees are exposed to these highly toxic, water-soluble insecticides via contact with dust from planting, from pollen gathered from target and adjacent crops or from ground water that translocates from the excess pesticide residues in the soil to streams and rivers.

While Ontario Beekeepers applaud Health Canada for taking action to phase out neonicotinoids. The proposed three to five year phase out will do much to protect our environment and preserve our food security, the OBA has made several recommendations to enhance how this phase out can help provide a healthy environment for insect pollinators:

**1. Accelerate the Phase out to begin this fall before treated seeds are ordered.**

Every year of delay is another planting season where bees will be exposed to deadly pesticides and where more toxic chemicals are added to our soils, streams and rivers.

**2. Pesticides like Imidacloprid have been oversold.**

The policy to reduce the use of neonicotinoids in Ontario was based on the determination that while nearly 100% of corn and 65% of soy were being sold as neonicotinoid treated seeds, only 20% of acreage was actually threatened by the pests targeted by the pesticides. This overuse of pesticides clearly benefits pesticide manufacturers at the expense of insect pollinators.

**3. Neonicotinoids including Imidacoprid continue to be a serious hazard to managed bees and all insect pollinators in Ontario.**

After analyzing hundreds of incidents of acute bee kills in Ontario during the 2012 and 2013 growing seasons, PMRA concluded that the current use of neonicotinoids in agriculture was not sustainable.

Beekeepers in Ontario continue to observe abnormally high bee mortality indicators including: acute bee deaths, unsustainable winter losses, loss of queens, low queen vitality, poor (spotty) brood patterns and crashing of hives in fall and early winter.

**4. Health Canada must review its pollinator risk assessment model before registering any new systemic pesticides.**

In anticipation of restrictions of neonicotinoids in Ontario, several new systemic insecticides such as (Dupont's Lumivia (chlorantraniliprole) are being sold as alternative seed treatments for corn grown in Ontario. Yet, despite research that has shown that the active ingredient in Lumivia negatively effects the behaviour of bees.<sup>1</sup> PMRA certified its use on corn in June of 2016.

**5. All pesticides should be used only as part of an Integrated Pest Management program.**

The current practice of the overuse of pesticides is destructive to our environment and benefits only the AgChem industry. Using pesticides in an IPM program and only when there is a demonstrated need is a reasonable policy for limiting their use.

Since 1881, the Ontario Beekeepers' Association has represented the interests of bees and beekeeping in Ontario. Exposure to neuro toxic pesticides is the most important issue affecting the health of insect pollinators in Ontario today and threatening the sustainability of Ontario's beekeeping industry.

For more information:

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