



MEDIA RELEASE

Ontario Beekeepers Reject PMRA Report

January 11, 2016, Milton, ON. According to the Ontario Beekeepers' Association (OBA), the recent Health Canada Pest Management Regulatory Agency's (PMRA) report, **Re-evaluation of Imidacloprid - Preliminary Pollinator Assessment**ⁱ must not be interpreted as permission to continue the overuse of neonicotinoid pesticides that have been killing bees and damaging Ontario's beekeeping industry.

Surprisingly, this report focuses on only one neonicotinoid - imidacloprid - and refutes PMRA's own warnings following massive bee kills in Ontario in 2013:

"The information evaluated to date, suggests that clothianidin and/or thiamethoxam contributed to many of the 2013 bee losses..." and "...current agricultural practices related to the use of neonicotinoid treated corn and soybean seed are not sustainable."ⁱⁱ

Beekeepers question why PMRA has issued an evaluation of the safety of imidacloprid on corn when clothianidin (PONCHO™), according to its manufacturer, Bayer, *"is the number one seed-applied insecticide for corn."* Prior to the implementation of the new regulations, seed treatments were routinely applied to 99% of corn and 65% of soy in Ontario, although crop experts suggest that only 20% of the acreage of these crops actually needed protection from the insects targeted by these neonicotinoids.

Ontario beekeepers question PMRA's methodologies and assumptions on the dosage and effects on bee health. There are also a number of caveats spread throughout the report that call into question the current use of neonicotinoids on corn and soy, *"Based on the available colony tunnel studies alone, potential long-term sublethal effects that may result from chronic exposure due to seed treatment is not fully addressed."*

To address the inconsistencies that contradict the overwhelming amount of scientific evidence supporting the moratorium of neonicotinoids in Europe and the decision by the Government of Ontario to reduce the use of neonicotinoids on corn and soy by 85% by 2017, the OBA has convened a panel of scientists to review and comment on the PMRA report. Their commentary is expected to be issued by the end of January.

The OBA continues to be concerned about the health of managed bees and native pollinators. Recently, StatsCan released bee colony numbers for Canada that indicated that Ontario suffered a decline of over 10% in the number of honey bee colonies in 2015 compared to a 6% increase for the rest of Canada, a 16% differenceⁱⁱⁱ. Queen imports into Ontario continue at a record pace reflecting the need to replace dead or damaged queens.

“Ontario beekeepers continue to experience lower honey yields, higher operating costs and higher colony mortality,” says Tibor Szabo, president of the OBA. “We categorically reject any notion that overplanting of corn and soy and the overuse of seed treatments with neonicotinoids are not contributing to the ill effects on our industry.”

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For science on neonicotinoids and other resources: <http://www.ontariobee.com/science>

ⁱ PMRA report on imidacloprid: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pest/part/consultations/_rev2016-05/rev2016-05-eng.php

ⁱⁱ PMRA report on losses related to spring planting:
<http://www.ontariobee.com/sites/ontariobee.com/files/PMRAreportOct2013U.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Link to StatsCanada report on honey production in Canada.
<http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/pick-choisir?lang=eng&p2=33&id=0010007>