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## **Ontario suffers Canada's worst winter bee losses**

**Milton, Ontario.** Ontario beekeepers lost 58% of their bees last winter, more than three times the average of the rest of Canada according to a new report from CAPA, the Canadian Association of Professional Apiculturists. To put this startling number in perspective, beekeepers consider 15% the acceptable over-winter loss for beekeepers.

CAPA's figures are consistent with OBA's own survey undertaken earlier in the year, which showed that more than a quarter of Ontario's beekeepers lost 75% to 100% of their colonies.

According to CAPA, winter losses across the country have been reduced by 25% since 2007/08, and yet Ontario's number keeps rising.

Pesticide exposure continues to be a major issue for Ontario beekeepers as Ontario grows almost 70% of Canada's corn and soy, crops that are heavily treated with neonicotinoid pesticides. These systemic pesticides applied to corn and soy seeds were connected to bee kills in Ontario and Quebec in both 2012 and 2013 by Health Canada.

CAPA confirms, *"There are still concerns amongst many beekeepers, particularly in Ontario and Quebec, that exposure to neonicotinoid insecticides during the sprig and summer may lead to increased stress to colonies contributing to winterloss."*

"Ontario beekeepers have been devastated by exposure of colonies to these highly toxic pesticides," says OBA president, Dan Davidson. "Not only do they kill bees outright, but exposure in the hive through contaminated pollen almost guarantees they will not survive the winter. Beekeepers are reporting significant summer losses, as well, as a result of pesticide contamination."

Earlier this month, the Ontario government indicated that they will take steps to limit the use of neonicotinoids by putting a permit system into place. Nearly 100% of corn seeds and 65% of soy seeds are currently sold in Ontario pretreated with neonicotinoid coatings, although OMAF crop experts have said that, *"only 10 to 20% of the corn and soybean acres are actually at risk of most of the soil pests on the product labels."*<sup>1</sup>

"Beekeepers cannot sustain these losses and many will have to leave the business if these losses continue," says Tibor Szabo, OBA Vice President and queen breeder. "The Government of Ontario must immediately take the initiative to ensure this permit is in place for the 2015 growing season if we are to have a sustainable industry as well as the pollinators we need for our fresh fruits and vegetables."

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<sup>1</sup> Using Fungicide-Only Treated Seed and Following IPM <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/field/news/croptalk/2013/ct->