



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Farmers Need All the Facts about Pesticides and Bees

July 25, 2013. Milton Ontario. Ontario's beekeepers are not happy with the actions of the Grain Farmers of Ontario (GFO), the agribusiness organization representing Ontario's corn and soybean producers. Yesterday, the GFO launched a campaign asking their 28,000 members to help prevent a ban on neonicotinoids, the toxic pesticides that were responsible for bee kills in Ontario last year.

"It is sad that the GFO ignores the fact that these pesticides are the main reason for our alarming decline in bee population in Ontario." said Dan Davidson, President of the Ontario Beekeepers Association. "Ontario farmers deserve the straight facts."

The Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) of Health Canada confirmed the link between widespread bee kills in 2012 and the use of these pesticides on corn plantings in Ontario. Residues were found in 80% of the 240 bee kill locations and on 70% of the bees tested. Preliminary reports indicate that bee kills are occurring at an even higher rate this year.

"I've done multiple year, on-farm trials with these seed treatments with no noticeable yield gains," says Don Van Damme, who grows corn, soybeans and wheat on 900 acres in Brooke Township. "The harmful effects to our local beekeepers, plus the extra cost and limited yield benefit makes the product very unappealing. In my opinion, a safer product used in an integrated pest management system would be a better approach."

Faced with rapidly declining bee populations, the OBA has asked the Ontario Government to enact a suspension of the use of neonicotinoids on field crops in Ontario. OMAF has recently established a multi-sectoral bee health working group to recommend solutions to the problem of bee mortality in the province. The GFO and the OBA sit on this committee.

In April of this year, after a thorough review of research and despite opposition from multi-national pesticide manufacturers, the European Union suspended the use of neonicotinoid pesticides for two years on field crops in Europe.

A recent poll by the Sierra Club indicated that only 10% of Canadians oppose banning neonicotinoid pesticides.

The Ontario Beekeepers' Association represents the interests of the approximately 3,000 beekeepers in Ontario managing over 70,000 colonies.

For more background or information on the scientific evidence related to neonicotinoids please go to ontariobee.com/neonics.

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