

1. WE NEED BEES

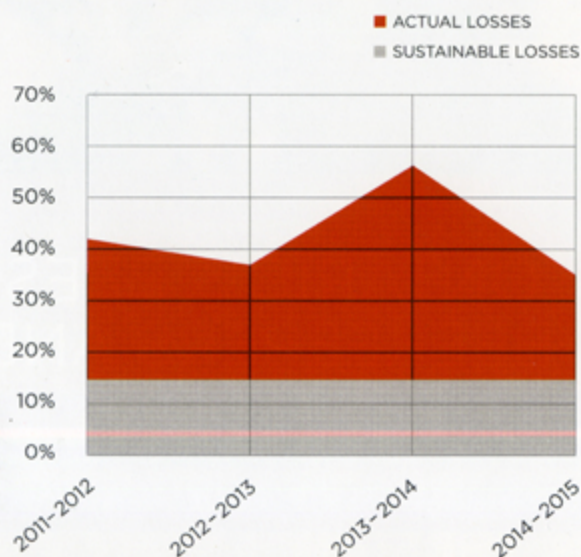
Fewer bees means less fruit and vegetables. Over 60% of our global food supply is pollinated by bees. Honey bees and wild bees are the most important pollinators of many of Ontario's fruits and vegetables.

2. BEES ARE IN DECLINE

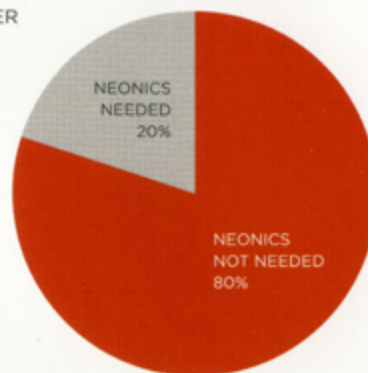
The declining health and population of bees and wild pollinators is cause for concern. In the winter of 2013-14, the mortality rate reached its highest level at 58%. Overwinter die-offs have averaged 34% over the past 12 years. The level generally considered to be acceptable and sustainable by beekeepers is 15%.

3. SYSTEMIC PESTICIDES

In Ontario, nearly 100% of corn and 65% of soy seeds are coated with neonicotinoid pesticides, yet crop specialists say only 20% of these acres actually need pesticide protection. Neonicotinoids are systemic insecticides, which means that the toxic ingredients move into the pollen and nectar of treated crops or flowering plants and remain in the soil and ground water. While bees are subject to stress from pests and disease, evidence points to neonicotinoids as the cause of much of the recent decline in bee populations. In 2013, the Federal Pest Management Regulatory Agency declared that, "current agricultural practices related to neonicotinoid-treated seed are not sustainable".



80% OF NEONICOTINOID TREATED SEEDS OFFER LITTLE BENEFIT TO FARMERS



4. WHAT SCIENCE SAYS

After plants absorb neonicotinoids, they slowly metabolize the compounds. Some of the resulting breakdown products are equally toxic or even more toxic to honey bees. Bees exposed to sublethal levels of neonicotinoids can experience problems with flying and navigation, reduced taste sensitivity, and slower learning of new tasks, all of which impact foraging ability. In June 2014, the Global Task Force on Systemic Pesticides reviewed 800 studies on the effects of neonicotinoids. Among the study's main conclusions, "The combination of prophylactic use, persistence, mobility, systemic properties and chronic toxicity is predicted to result in substantial impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem functioning."

5. BEEKEEPERS AND FARM PRACTICE

Ontario beekeepers have always had a good relationship with farmers on whose land they have placed their hives. Unfortunately, the use of neonicotinoid-treated seed on almost five million acres of corn, soy and winter wheat has left little room for beekeepers to avoid exposure to neonicotinoids at planting, on pollen and nectar, or via standing water. The unprecedented growth in the acreage of corn and soy has also eliminated many of the traditional honey bee and wild bee forage plants. By reducing the percent of farmland exposed to neonicotinoids, Ontario's beekeepers will have more safe choices for placing their bees. And hopefully, marginal land will be returned to pasture hosting a variety of flowering plants and shrubs.

WHAT ONTARIO IS DOING

The Government of Ontario is the first major jurisdiction in North America to take real action to address the overuse of neonicotinoids. Recognizing that the decline of pollinators requires immediate action to ensure that Ontario's food system and natural environment are protected, the Government of Ontario has recommended policies to:

- Reduce the acreage of neonicotinoid-treated corn and soy crops by 80% by 2017;
- Reduce honey bee overwinter mortality in Ontario to 15% by 2020.

Ontario Beekeepers' Association

Since 1881, the OBA has represented the interests of Ontario's beekeepers, now numbering 3100. Our mission is to enable a viable and sustainable beekeeping industry in Ontario. We advocate for bee health and other insect pollinators, all of which are vital to Ontario's fresh food supply.

For more information about this issue and the OBA please visit ontariobee.com/neonics

