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Gift Supports Pollinator Health, Sustainable Pest Management

May 05, 2014 - News Release

The University of Guelph has received a \$750,000 donation to help support and preserve pollinator health through sustainable pest management.

The donation from Bayer CropScience Inc. was made to the BetterPlanet Project, the University's \$200-million fundraising campaign for teaching and research in food, environment, health and communities.

Among other projects, the gift will support the creation of the Centre for Beneficial Insect Health through the School of Environmental Sciences. The centre would emphasize sustainable pest management in agriculture, including work on field and horticultural crops, greenhouse production, insecticide resistance and biological insect control.

"This investment will support new teaching, research and outreach efforts of critical importance said U of G president Alastair Summerlee.

"Pollinator health is important for sustainable agri-business, the food chain and the economy."

"At its heart, Bayer is a research and development company. We live our commitment to research and development in everything we do," said Kamel Beliazi, president and CEO, Bayer CropScience Canada.

"Through our support over the next five years, critical work will be done to champion the issues of beneficial insect health and sustainable pest management in agriculture. This includes world-class research and collaborative work with industry, government and other researchers globally in the area of pollinator conservation and bee health."

The diversity and numbers of insect pollinators are falling globally because of such factors as disease, pesticide exposure, malnutrition, habitat loss and climate change. In Canada, 28 species of butterflies and moths and two bee species are known to be at risk. In the United States, honeybee populations have declined by 30 per cent in the past 20 years.

Of some 300 crops used for food, fodder and fibre worth about \$200 billion-plus a year, about 80 per cent need pollinators to set seeds and fruit.

“The health of beneficial insects is vital to the health of our planet and more specially our agricultural ecosystems,” said Rob Gordon, dean of the Ontario Agricultural College (OAC).

“This important investment will help us find innovative ways to improve pest management systems while safeguarding pollinators and promoting a productive agricultural industry.”

Established in 1874, OAC boasts world-recognized programs and experts in insect care and sustainable pest management. It’s also home to North America’s largest research and teaching apiary.

Gordon said the new Centre for Beneficial Insect Health is intended to build on these strengths, leading to the development of effective and progressive pest management strategies while protecting pollinators. The centre will also promote outreach and awareness among farmers, industry and the general public.

The Bayer gift complements an earlier \$3-million campaign donation from the W. Garfield Weston Foundation that established a chair in pollinator conservation. Nigel Raine, a leader in pollination conservation and ecology from Britain, will join U of G this month as the Rebanks Family Chair in Pollinator Conservation.

About Bayer CropScience

Bayer is a global enterprise with core competencies in the fields of health care, agriculture and high-tech materials. Bayer CropScience, the subgroup of Bayer AG responsible for the agricultural business, has annual sales of EUR 8,819 million (2013) and is one of the world’s leading innovative crop science companies in the areas of seeds, crop protection and non-agricultural pest control. The company offers an outstanding range of products including high value seeds, innovative crop protection solutions based on chemical and biological modes of action as well as an extensive service backup for modern, sustainable agriculture. In the area of non-agricultural applications, Bayer CropScience has a broad portfolio of products and services to control pests from home and garden to forestry applications. The company has a global workforce of 22,400 and is represented in more than 120 countries. This and further news is available at: www.bayercropscience.ca.

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