



## Beemageddon? Honeybee numbers at 20 year high

Christopher Ingraham | August 10, 2015 | [Washington Post](#)



You've heard the news about honeybees. "[Beepocalypse](#)," they've called it. [Beemageddon](#). America's honeybees are dying, putting honey production and [\\$15 billion worth of pollinated food crops](#) in jeopardy.

The trouble all began around 2006, when beekeepers began noticing mysterious die-offs. It was soon christened "[colony collapse disorder](#)," and has been responsible for the loss of [20 to 40 percent of managed honeybee colonies](#) each winter.

But the number of honeybee colonies has actually *risen* since CCD was first documented in 2006, from 2.4 million to 2.7 million in 2014, according to [the USDA](#). The 2014 numbers show that the number commercial honey-producing bee colonies managed by human beekeepers is now the highest it's been in 20 years.

So if CCD is wiping out close to a third of all honeybee colonies a year, how are their numbers rising? One word: Beekeepers.

Beekeepers have devised two main ways to replenish stock. The first involves [splitting one healthy colony into two separate colonies](#). The other involves buying a bunch of bees to replace the ones you lost. When CCD came along, it roughly doubled the usual annual rate of bee die-

offs. But this doesn't mean that bees are going extinct, just that beekeepers need to work a little harder to keep production up.

The price of that extra work will get passed on to the consumer. The retail price of honey has [roughly doubled since 2006](#). And Kim Kaplan, a researcher with the USDA, points out the amount beekeepers charge to cart their bees around to farms and pollinate fruit and nut trees has [approximately doubled over the same period](#).

But rising prices for fruit and nuts hardly constitute the “beepocalypse” that we've all been worried about.