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Grain farmers battle beekeepers over pesticide ban

The Grain Farmers Association of Ontario hopes its lobbying campaign will convince the province that a ban on pesticides is not the way to fight bee deaths

By Matt Moir, [CBC News](#)

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The bee wars are heating up.

The Grain Farmers Association of Ontario is launching a public relations campaign to convince the province that a ban on pesticides suspected of being responsible for a major drop in the bee population is a bad idea.

“We want to make sure that any decisions are made with common sense and with a science-based approach. Anything else would be very premature,” said Barry Senft, CEO of the Grain Farmers Association.

Premier Kathleen Wynne, who is also the province's Minister of Agriculture and Food, has been under pressure from bee and beekeeping organizations to impose a ban on neonicotinoid pesticides. Ontario's bee population has fallen by roughly 35 per cent, and some groups feel that the pesticides are to blame.

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Farmers use pesticides to prevent insects and pests from eating crops.

Senft said that there are a variety of reasons behind the drop in population including climate change and parasites, and that there is no conclusive evidence that pesticide use is the culprit.

Lobby group sending postcards to politicians



The Ontario Grain Farmers Association mailed out a postcard to members and politicians urging them to fight against a potential pesticide ban. (Grain Farmers Of Ontario)

His association is sending out information kits to all members as well as to MPPs urging them to help reject a ban on pesticides.

“We've sent out a postcard with a number of points we'd like our members to raise with MPPs and MPs, and we're participating in a provincial committee that's set up to look at the issue. Our message is that we need to let due process continue in terms of tests and results and not have a knee-jerk reaction in regards to the banning of a tool that's very much utilized by our farmers.”

Senft also said that his organization wants to work constructively with all stakeholders to “get to the bottom of this issue,” but pesticide use is “the only [issue] that's in the sights of the bee industry right now.”

A lot of farmers don't know what they're using, they're just trusting what they hear from regulatory and from the chemical companies.'

—Dan Davidson, farmer and Ontario Beekeeper Association president

However, in April, in an effort to reduce health risks to honeybees, Ontario's agriculture ministry asked grain farmers to take extra care when planting crops this spring.

A Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs entomologist said that "virtually all corn seed" is treated with a neonicotinoid insecticide, which could pose a threat to the health of honey bees. Tracey Baute said "neonicotinoid contaminated dust" is eventually carried into the air and could be linked to the death of thousands of bees.

Farmers 'just trusting' chemical companies

Dan Davidson is in the peculiar situation of being the president of the Ontario Beekeepers Association as well as a member of the Grain Farmers Association. He said the postcards that the Grain Association is sending out omit important information.

“I got my information kit in the mail yesterday, and when they list the reasons for bees dying, they forgot about pesticides, I guess, because there's no mention of pesticides on there.”

Although Davidson is involved in two organizations with very different views on the pesticide issue, he says that he does

not feel conflicted.

“I'm educated on neonicotinoids and I know what they're capable of so I have no problem with them being banned. I'm sure if everyone knew and educated themselves on chemicals they'd feel the same way. A lot of farmers don't know what they're using, they're just trusting what they hear from regulatory and from the chemical companies.”

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When used properly by growers, with Best Management Practices, neonicotinoid insecticides cause no harm, and do not hurt bees. It is far more likely that bee-keepers themselves are harming bees, and not insecticides. If some anti-pesticide activists and bee-keepers were not so scientifically illiterate, they would know that scientific research shows that no harm will occur to bees with pest control products. <http://wp.me/p1jq40-2ba> <http://wp.me/p1jq40-6H8>
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Pember

Science-based approaches can also be characterized as an evidence-based approach. Where is the science or evidence that every seed planted in the ground year after year requires a pesticide coating. Farmers tend to test soil and make beneficial and measured inputs based on the findings...why don't they do the same with harmful insects rather than

using a blanket and prophylactic approach. The practice seems to be incongruent with a Science-based or evidence-based practice.

2 hours ago 0 Likes

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Will Panos

“We want to make sure that any decisions are made with common sense and with a science-based approach. Anything else would be very premature,” said Barry Senft, CEO of the Grain Farmers Association. Where was the science based approach when these toxins were first introduced? Sorry but all the science is pointing to neonicotinoids, which must be banned immediately!

4 hours ago 0 Likes

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Jack Canada

Einstein predicted that without bees, man will disappear in 4 years. Colonies of bees have suddenly disappeared from 24 states. Ban pesticides.

<http://voices.yahoo.com/einstein-if-honeybees-disappear-man-will-disappear-6080338.html?cat=9>

<http://science.time.com/2013/05/07/beeapocalypse-redux-honey-bees-are-still-dying-and-we-still-dont-know-why/>

9 hours ago 0 Likes

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Norah G Fon

What the heck does Einstein have to do about the CURRENT issues with bees ?!?! Again, it is far more likely that the bee-keepers themselves are harming bees, and NOT the insecticides used by growers. Furthermore, nobody is going to disappear in the next four years. Your argument is weak and pointless.

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PaddleFaster

How selfish it seems the grain farmers care only about themselves. Maybe because they don't need bees to pollinate their grain. No bees no monarch butterflies what is next? Ban neonicotinoids now.

10 hours ago 0 Likes

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Awaiting moderation...

Norah G Fon

If there were no grain growers, there would be no food. With no food, you will starve to death. Consequently, if you complained about starvation, would you be considered selfish ?!?!

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