Notice of Intent NOI2013-01

Action to Protect Bees from Exposure to Neonicotinoid Pesticides

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Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) has determined that current agricultural practices related to the use of neonicotinoid treated corn and soybean seed are affecting the environment due to their impacts on bees and other pollinators. This notice outlines our intended actions and provides interested parties an opportunity to comment.

In the spring and summer of 2012, we received a significant number of pollinator mortality reports mainly from corn growing regions of Ontario and Quebec. Areas of high corn production correlated well with the locations of bee mortalities. Approximately 70% of the affected dead bee samples tested positive for residues of neonicotinoid insecticides used to treat corn seeds while neonicotinoids were only detected in unaffected bees in one sample at very low levels. We concluded that the majority of pollinator mortalities were a result of exposure to neonicotinoid insecticides, likely through exposure to contaminated dust generated during the planting of treated corn seed. The unusually warm and dry weather conditions were thought to be a contributing factor. Measures were implemented to reduce pollinator exposure, such as the introduction of best management practices for seed planting.

However, in spring 2013 with more typical weather patterns, we continued to receive a significant number of pollinator mortality reports from both corn and soybean growing regions of Ontario and Quebec, as well as Manitoba. Consequently, we have concluded that current agricultural practices related to the use of neonicotinoid treated corn and soybean seed are not sustainable.

For the 2014 planting season, we intend to implement additional protective measures for corn and soybean production, including:

- Requiring the use of safer dust-reducing seed flow lubricants;
- Requiring adherence to safer seed planting practices;
- Requiring new pesticide and seed package labels with enhanced warnings; and,
- Requiring updated value information be provided to support the continued need for neonicotinoid treatment on up to 100% of the corn seed and 50% of the soybean seed.

We are working with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, provincial governments, growers, beekeepers and the pesticide industry to determine if other options exist that would protect the environment while allowing the continued use of these seed treatments for corn and soybean. At a recent meeting with officials from the Ontario and Quebec ministries of Environment and Agriculture, a number of important research projects such as those aimed at improving integrated pest management techniques were discussed and potential solutions were explored.

Bee health is a complex issue that goes beyond the incidents in 2012 and 2013 and may involve a number of additional factors, including parasites, disease and climate. Health Canada’s PMRA is currently conducting a re-evaluation of all uses of neonicotinoid insecticides in cooperation with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) as part of the work being done with international partners. We are expediting this re-evaluation, which will help us better understand and manage potential risks these pesticides may pose to long-term bee health.

Health Canada's PMRA also proposes to implement label improvements similar to those announced by the US EPA on 15 August 2013.

Health Canada's PMRA applies a science-based approach to regulate pesticides. We continue to review new scientific information as it becomes available and we will take additional action as needed, at any time, to further protect health and the environment.

Please provide your comments to pmra.publications@hc-sc.gc.ca **by 12 December 2013**, and include the following information:

- Your full name and organization;
- Your phone number; and,
- Your complete mailing address or email address.