

Canada should follow E.U. to prevent bee deaths: U.K. expert



A Honey Bee sits amid oregano blossoms

courtesy of the Ontario Beekeepers' Association
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ByMichael Michalski

A noted U.K. bee expert says Canada is behind the times when it comes to recognizing the dangers of a controversial pesticide known as neonicotinoid, noting the similarities of present-day debate here and those faced in the European Union almost 20 years ago.

“The situation here in Canada now is similar to how the situation was in the E.U. back in 1996. It’s the beekeepers that are seeing this the most-clearly because it’s hurting their business. Everything is similar – and no one is paying attention to the bee keepers,” said Professor Dave Goulson to OurWindsor.

“We started using neonics in Europe back in 90s, and back then, it was the French bee keepers who first started saying that their bees were dying. Thing is, they were sort of the lone voice – and French farmers are known as being rather militant, so people thought they were just being eccentric.

“Then, the evidence began to snowball. We’ve done thousands of scientific studies since then that began to form a minority view, which soon became the majority view.”

That view, put simply, is that neonicotinoid seed treatments are deadly to bees – and not just honey bees, points out Goulson, but bumble bees and countless other scores of wild bees that are equally if not more important to our overall ecosystem and environment.

Bees can be exposed to neonics by several routes: contact with contaminated dust, consuming pollen or nectar from the treated crop, adjacent flowers, and fields or consuming water (puddles, surface water and guttation fluid).

In recognition of these facts, the E.U. is placing a two-year ban on neonicotinoid beginning December 13, 2013.

“The sooner we stop using (neonics) the better,” said Goulson, in Canada as a guest of this country’s Friends of the Earth group, one of 76 such counties with similar groups. The visit comes days before Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne is scheduled to release findings from her work with the Ontario Bee Health Working Group.

“You can catch up quite rapidly if the politicians are willing to do so,” he added.

“Some bee species in North America have gone extinct. We know this. Of course, once they’re gone, there’s no coming back. There’s quite a bit left, but they are in decline. Now, the honey bees aren’t in danger of going extinct – not yet – because you have armies of beekeepers keeping them alive. So there’s no immediate danger there. There are a great number of other species than honey bees, however, that – if they were to become extinct – could have devastating effects on crops and the natural ecosystem.

“Three-quarters of all crops that humans eat are pollinated by bees. Your fruits – your strawberries, your raspberries, your blueberries. Your vegetables – your beans, your tomatoes, your squash. You name it. They are all dependant on bees. Even things like chocolate and coffee are dependent on bees.”

Of note, findings from a recent Friends of the Earth-commissioned poll reportedly show eight of 10 people in Ontario support a ban on pesticides linked to bee deaths.

"Clearly, Ontario residents want to stop the bee carnage," said Beatrice Olivastri, CEO, Friends of the Earth Canada. "The federal Minister of Health, Rona Ambrose, has the power to immediately de-register neonics. And she should. But if not, Ontario's Minister of Agriculture can suspend use of these pesticides in Ontario. Time is running out for action to save the honey bees before the spring 2014 planting season. We need to follow the example of The European Union's two year ban on neonics that commences next month."

Neonics are synthetic versions of nicotine, and are neurotoxins that kill insects by breaking down their nervous system. The class includes clothianidin, imidacloprid and thiamethoxam and associated products registered in Canada. In Ontario 100% of seed corn was coated with neonics.

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EU NATIONS DO NOT WANT PROHIBITION

Pesticides hurting bees is a MYTH, and prohibition against neonicotinoid insecticides is not necessary. The two-year European Union (EU) prohibition against neonicotinoid insecticides was falsely justified as a way to tackle bee colony collapse disorder. It is perhaps worth pointing out that France prohibited against neonicotinoid insecticides in the 1990s, and it has seen NO marked reduction in bee colony collapse disorder. Moreover, the majority of European Union (EU) nations do not want anti-pesticide prohibition. EU government officials are thinking twice before banning pesticides. European Union nations have been unable to reach agreement on proposals to arbitrarily prohibit the use of three neonicotinoid insecticides that have been linked to the decline of bees. A decline in bee numbers has been linked by false allegations regarding neonicotinoid insecticides. Before the European Commission imposed an arbitrary two-year EU-wide moratorium (a.k.a. anti-pesticide prohibition), the majority of nations opposed the plans. European Union nations were unable to reach a qualified majority in order for prohibition to be adopted. The EU majority decision against prohibition is a clear recognition that there is no convincing argument against the continued use of neonicotinoid insecticides. For more information regarding EUROPEAN UNION, go to The Pesticide Truths Web-Site ... <http://wp.me/p1jq40-6yB> <http://wp.me/p1jq40-6H8> For more information regarding BEES, go to The Pesticide Truths Web-Site ... <http://wp.me/p1jq40-2ba> <http://wp.me/p1jq40-6WJ> <http://wp.me/p1jq40-6H8> WILLIAM H. GATHERCOLE AND NORAH G <http://pesticidetruths.com/> <http://wp.me/P1jq40-2rr>