



## **For Immediate Release**

### **GRAIN FARMERS OF ONTARIO EXTREMELY DISAPPOINTED WITH PESTICIDE RESTRICTION ANNOUNCEMENT**

**GUELPH, ON (July 7, 2014)** - Grain Farmers of Ontario is extremely disappointed to have read yesterday's media statement that Ontario's newly appointed Minister of Agriculture intends to make this province the first in Canada to restrict the use of neonicotinoid pesticides.

The Ontario grain industry has committed extensive resources over the past two years to mitigate the risk to bees. Many of these initiatives have been launched and put into practice this growing season and the results of ongoing research projects and in-field practices will be paramount in determining any future regulatory decisions. It is counterintuitive to implement a regulatory change without the completion of this research and trials.

"The effort and leadership grain farmers have demonstrated on this issue has been second to none, and to have this discounted with such a rash move and announcement through media, is frankly insulting," says Henry Van Ankum, Chair of Grain Farmers of Ontario. "Farmers across the countryside have modified their equipment, are participating in field trials, are using the new mandatory fluency agent which has proven successful, and have forged good, open communications with many beekeepers – we have a lot to share with Minister Leal and have not yet had the opportunity."

The move Minister Leal is proposing is a move against Canada's science based regulatory system. Ironically, on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, Minister Leal sent a letter to Grain Farmers of Ontario for publication in the Ontario Grain Farmer magazine stating "we must continue to ensure decisions are balanced and based in science". Naturally, the organization is confused by these contradictory messages, only days apart.

Further, farmers across the province are shocked by the manner this announcement was made. Grain farmers have demonstrated their cooperation with government on this issue since 2012 and have had a positive working relationship with those involved in the bee health file. Grain Farmers of Ontario is extremely disappointed that Minister Leal did not take the time to consult the organization as there will be negative financial impact to Ontario's corn and soybean farmers and the grain industry as a whole.

Grain Farmers of Ontario has always had a good working relationship with the Minister of Agriculture and we hope that this continues in the future. This is not a good start – our organization believes in an open and collaborative approach and we encourage this government to work cooperatively with us as we move forward.

#### ***Grain Farmers of Ontario***

Grain Farmers of Ontario is the province's largest commodity organization, representing Ontario's 28,000 corn, soybean and wheat farmers. The crops they grow cover 5 million acres of farm land across the province, generate over \$2.5 billion in farm gate receipts, result in over \$9 billion in economic output and are responsible for over 40,000 jobs in the province.

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## Background

Bee Health Working Group Recommendation	Grain Industry Action
Improvements to Growing Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Updated Best Management Practices for 2014 can be viewed here: <a href="http://www.gfo.ca/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=Jsg4hLPClt4%3d&amp;tabid=965">http://www.gfo.ca/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=Jsg4hLPClt4%3d&amp;tabid=965</a>)</li> <li>- Grain Farmers of Ontario has committed over \$260,000 to new integrated pest management research</li> <li>- Untreated seed available for purchase in 2013 for the 2014 planting season</li> <li>- Crop rotation (corn, soybeans, wheat or other cereal crop) continues to be a common practice among grain farmers, dictated by soil and environmental conditions</li> </ul>
Improved Communications Between Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grain Farmers of Ontario has developed a new SmartPhone app called 'BeConnected' to allow farmers and beekeepers to locate each other (by GPS location) quickly and easily, and to facilitate communication</li> <li>- 'BeConnected' is being piloted during the spring, summer, and fall of 2014</li> <li>- Grain Farmers of Ontario has also communicated information to stakeholders about best management practices and the fluency agent through the Ontario Grain Farmer magazine, advertisements in farm publications, on several radio programs, at their Annual District Meetings by facilitating panel discussions, and a dedicated webpage: <a href="http://www.gfo.ca/protectingpollinators">www.gfo.ca/protectingpollinators</a></li> </ul>
Environmental Enhancements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conversations between Grain Farmers of Ontario and the Independent Commercial Beekeepers are ongoing surrounding environmental enhancements</li> </ul>
Technical Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deflectors for planting equipment are being pilot tested during the 2014 planting season</li> <li>- New fluency agent, to reduce dust, is mandatory for use in planters for 2014 season</li> <li>- CleanFARMS is operating a pilot program in southwestern Ontario to collect, and safely dispose of, empty seed and pesticide bags</li> </ul>
Mandatory Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Ontario Pesticide Safety Course now includes a section on the proper handling and use of treated seed</li> </ul>
Regulatory Approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grain farmers across the province are actively demonstrating outstanding environmental stewardship and commitment to improving bee health in Ontario - a ban on neonicotinoid seed treatments, critical to the sustainable farming of 5 million acres of corn and soybeans, is not appropriate</li> <li>- A recent study on the impacts of a restriction on neonicotinoid seed treatments on Ontario corn and soybean production indicates:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Revenue from total corn and soybean production could fall by \$600 million without access to neonicotinoid seed treatments</li> <li>o The total negative impact on Ontario's GDP, including supply chain effects, is estimated to be over \$400 million</li> </ul> </li> </ul>