

Ontario looking to restrict use of bee-killing pesticides

Province to consult with agriculture and could move by 2015

By Susan Noakes, [CBC News](#) Posted: Jul 07, 2014 3:18 PM ET Last Updated: Jul 07, 2014 3:28 PM ET

Ontario plans to consult with growers and agricultural representatives over the next few months to reduce or eliminate use of neonicotinoids – a class of chemicals implicated in the deaths of bees.

Ontario Agriculture Minister Jeff Leal said the province wants to “move away from the widespread, indiscriminate use of neonicotinoid-based pesticides.”

‘Over the coming months I want to first consult with industry, farmers and environmental stakeholders on options that are practical, including the consideration of a licence system’- *Ontario Agriculture Minister Jeff Leal*

“I am committed to finding a balanced approach, based in science, that addresses the important role both pollinators and growers play in Ontario’s agri-food industry,” Leal said in a statement.

“Over the coming months I want to first consult with industry, farmers and environmental stakeholders on options that are practical, including the consideration of a licence system.”

The province stopped short of saying it would impose a ban, as it did with the [cosmetic pesticides used on lawns and golf courses](#).

But the minister said he hoped to develop a system by 2015 that would ensure the pesticide is used only where there is “demonstrated need.”

Ontario can block sale of chemicals

Ontario doesn’t have the power to ban neonicotinoids – a class of chemicals also known as neonics – but it can ban their sale in the province as it did with lawn chemicals.

- [Bee researchers raise more warning flags about neonicotinoid pesticides](#)
- [Honey bee deaths start with pesticide, end with virus](#)

Up to 100 per cent of corn seed and half of soybean seed is grown using neonics.

Beekeepers have expressed concern about neonics for years and the agriculture industry is worried it will not have the pollinators it needs to keep fruits and vegetables developing.

“Fully a third of our food relies on pollinators: without bees, Ontario’s food supply could be in serious trouble,” Ontario Beekeeper’s Association says in a petition to Premier Kathleen Wynne asking for a ban on the pesticides.

A Health Canada study linked widespread deaths of bees to use of the chemicals.

Evidence mounts against neonics

Evidence has been mounting linking neonicotinoids to bee mortality. In late June, the [Task Force on Systemic Pesticides](#), a group of 50 scientists from around the world, released a study of the literature about the long-term impact of neonics and concluded they ought to be banned.

- [Bee-killing neonicotinoids worry Montreal gardener](#)

Plants sprayed with neonics can remain toxic for years and that can affect entire ecosystems, they found.

Neonics are a family of chemicals that disrupt the central nervous systems of insects and can discourage pests like aphids and grubs for the life of a plant.

One of the problems with them, as far as bees are concerned, is that they are systemic pesticides, that are applied to seeds and roots but

then become incorporated into the plant and can show up in leaves, pollen, nectar, fruit and flowers.

Several retail chains that sell home garden plants have said they are reviewing practices at their suppliers over use of neonicotinoids.

Retailers review neonics on nursery plants

Rona, Canadian Tire and Home Depot have been under pressure since a Friends of the Earth study in Canada found neonics in the flowers and pollen of plants that had begun life in their nurseries.

Friends of the Earth tested home garden plants, including bee-friendly plants such as Shasta daisy and salvia, for the pesticide and found more than half of plants in garden centres in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver contained neonics.

Rona and Canadian Tire said they were working with their vendors to assess how neonicotinoids are used by plant nurseries in wake of the Friends of the Earth report. Home Depot said it is working with its suppliers “to understand the science and find alternatives.”

A Rona spokeswoman said the company has “been paying close attention to the neonicotinoid pesticides issue.”

“Since we favour an approach based on dialogue and continuous improvement with our suppliers, we will complete our due diligence with them and then apply the business recommendations accordingly,” the company said in a statement.

A Canadian Tire statement pointed to Health Canada’s efforts to review the impact of neonics.

Health Canada 'monitoring'

Health Canada put in guidelines last year for the soybean and corn growers, who use neonicotinoids on the seeds, demanding a dust-reducing lubricant to prevent the pesticide spreading at seeding time.

But it is monitoring whether this reduced bee mortality in 2014 and has demanded additional information on whether the chemicals are actually needed in agriculture.

It could introduce new measures for 2015 or halt the use of neonicotinoids altogether.

The European Union has already banned the chemicals.