

Green Jihad

Dr. Maria Spivak: Focus on bee food not pesticides

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University of Minnesota entomologist and Bee Lab director Maria Spivak has [weighed in](#) on the bee controversy in which her findings are the subject of an article published in the *Minnesota Post*. Dr. Spivak is skeptical of the claims that bees are experiencing colony collapse disorder resulting from pesticide use is not accurate. She states:

It happens – but the majority of colonies are dying for many, many reasons. From the mites, from bad nutrition, from not enough honey, from pesticides. ... Surprisingly few are being killed only by pesticides, really, but from diseases and pests and all of the interactions that seem to be happening.

Dr. Spivak also states that calls to ban neonicotinoid pesticides in order to save bees, while understandable, don't come up very often when bee colonies are analyzed.

And the other thing we need to understand about our insecticides is that – let me put it this way: If you go to the pharmacy, or if you take an aspirin, any drug for yourself, the active ingredient will be labeled, and the inert ingredients will be labeled.

If you go to a pesticide label, only the active ingredient will be there. The inert ingredients are all proprietary information, they're not revealed, and some of these, quote, inactive ingredients are actually more toxic than the active ingredient.

Dr. Spivak also goes on to point out that genetically modified crops aren't much of a problem for bees. Despite their being widely used it has resulted in a dramatic increase in herbicide use. This, in turn, has led to an indirect blow to bee habitats bee food supply with no toxic effects.

We grow Roundup-ready plants, which allows us to apply a lot of herbicide to kill of all the weedy flowers in the field without killing the crop. But many of those weedy plants have flowers that bees depend on for their food, and so the dramatic increase in herbicides is killing off the food for bees in many locations.

Ultimately, Dr. Spivak says, if you want to understand the problems bees are experiencing, the focus should be on the food supply. Very few bees are actually being killed resulting from pesticide use.

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Here is a short video where Dr. Spivak goes into why plants are a necessary food source for bees and how they adapt even when pesticides are used. What is most disturbing about the controversy surrounding pesticide use is that, like climate change, the science behind this is becoming more and more politicized and people like Dr. Maria Spivak maybe lone voices drowned out by a loud chorus seeking to ban their use.

As a species, human beings have the moral right to bend nature as we see fit not only for our survival but our ability to flourish. Calls to ban pesticides are an indirect assault on such a notion since to do so denies us the ability to grow food necessary for humans to live. The demise of the human population is the malevolent, underlying premise of attempts to restrict or ban pesticides and insecticides.