

Grain farmers taking Ontario to court over restriction of pesticides linked to bee health



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CLAIRE BROWNELL | June 29, 2015 3:44 PM ET

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TORONTO — The Grain Farmers of Ontario are taking the province to court over regulations that restrict the use of a controversial class of pesticides targeted by environmentalists concerned about bee deaths.

In a notice of application filed in Superior Court in Toronto Friday, the organization representing 28,000 corn, soybean and wheat producers in Ontario asked the court to delay the implementation of the regulation until May 1, 2016, “or such time as the requirements of the regulation can reasonably be met.” The province announced its intention to become the first jurisdiction in North America to restrict the use of neonicotinoid pesticides this month, and limits on the use of neonic-treated seeds were to go into effect Wednesday.

Under the new regulations, farmers who want to use treated seeds on more than half of their land must prepare a report demonstrating the need for the pesticide and submit to a soil inspection to determine the presence of pests. In the court application, the grain farmers argued this doesn’t make sense, because farmers have already planted their

fields for the season with neonic-treated seeds and the soil inspection will therefore find fewer pests than the threshold for permission to use the pesticide.

"This creates an impossible situation for farmers," the notice of application reads. "The consequences of the regulation are senseless and obviously harmful."

Neonic-treated seeds distribute pesticides through the plant as it grows. By 2017, the province plans to reduce the number of acres planted with neonics by 80 per cent.

Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency and the Ontario government started investigating the role of the pesticides in mass bee deaths at 242 bee yards in 2012, finding residues from the pesticide at 80 per cent of the yards tested. But beekeepers are divided on how much of a role neonics are playing in bee deaths and what action to take. The Ontario Beekeepers' Association supports an outright ban, while the Canadian Honey Council prefers a collaborative solution with farmers.

Meanwhile, farmers and the pesticide industry say it's not necessary to ban the pesticides outright to protect bee health. Measures to reduce pesticide-laced dust exposure during 2014 and 2015 planting have already reduced harm to bees by 80 per cent compared to 2013, according to Health Canada. In Alberta, bees appear to be relatively healthy despite foraging for pollen among 20-million acres of canola crops treated with the same neonic pesticides as the ones used in Ontario for the last 10 years.

In an emailed statement, a spokesman for Ontario Minister of the Environment and Climate Change Glen Murray said "it would be inappropriate to comment on specifics" because the matter is before the courts. The statement said the new rules were the result of an extensive consultation process with farmers, the public and other interested parties.

But Grain Farmers of Ontario chairman Mark Brock said the outcome of the process appeared to have been decided from the beginning.

"It would be in all of our best interests if we could take a more collaborative approach to dealing with this pollinator health issue as a whole," Brock said in a teleconference with media Monday. "The single-mindedness of the government to go down the path they have shows how ineffective it can be, in terms of trying to accomplish the goal they have in mind."

The court is scheduled to hear the application on Aug. 4, but a lawyer for the Grain Farmers of Ontario said he is trying to secure an earlier date some time in July in the hopes of winning a reprieve before farmers have to start submitting soil inspections and reports.

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Grain farmers want to delay new rules on pesticide linked to bee deaths



By [Debora Van Brenk](#), The London Free Press
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Grain farmers are making a last-ditch effort to block new regulations that would restrict their use of a pesticide seed coating that's been linked to Ontario bee deaths.

The Grain Farmers of Ontario have asked for court time so they can argue to delay for at least 10 months the impending deadline when new neonicotinoid rules come into effect.

The rules are to come into effect July 1 as the province looks to reduce neonic use by 80 per cent by 2017.

Grain lobbyists are asking the Ontario Superior Court of Justice to apply the "absurdity test" to the regulations: in effect, to say the regulations in place are impractical and simply can't work as intended.

Lawyer Eric Gillespie, representing the organization, said the notice was filed in Toronto and there are hopes of a court date in July.

Farmers insist the new rules won't improve bee health, as intended, and instead will wreak havoc on their livelihoods.

They want a ruling to come before they have to order seed for the 2016 planting season so they can plant under the same terms as this year's planting.

Grain Farmers of Ontario president Mark Brock, a Perth County farmer, said the regulations are "completely unworkable (and) pose a significant threat to our farmers."

The action is unprecedented in the organization's history, he said.

But it's impossible for farmers to meet the provincial deadlines, which he said would require them to predetermine the extent of next year's crop pests, before they decide in the next few months whether they need neonic-treated seed or not.

The organization's chief executive, Barry Senft, said, "The decision to seek legal action against the government of Ontario was not easy and is unprecedented in the history of our organization, but it is necessary and the outcome of our multi-step legal strategy will be critical to the livelihood of grain farmers across the province."

Neonicotinoids are used to coat corn and soybean seeds before planting, to prevent insects from creating damage in the crops.

Advocates say neonics are less harmful than other pesticides and safely improve crop yields.

But beekeepers and some environmental groups say the acute and long-term effects on bees has led to massive bee poisonings.

The Ontario Beekeepers Association called the grain farmers' move a "frivolous" action.

"I can't imagine that it would work," said Julie White, a Long Point beekeeper and board member of the beekeepers association. She said the legal effort represents just one more attempt to slow down the process, which is only days away from being implemented.

"I think the government is committed to this action. It's grounded in science. It's grounded in public opinion," she said.

The province has said its approach is one that gradually decreases the use of neonicotinoids while gradually improving pollinator protection.

Beekeepers board member Dennis Edell said the grain farmers' association walked out of consultations with the province and has since "ratcheted up" demands — which now include court action; telling farmers they should put pollination contracts in writing with beekeepers; and by suggesting growers who can't use seed treatments will instead use foliar spray on emerged plants.

THERE IS NO BEE CRISIS CAUSES BY INSECTICIDES

Overall, there is NO bee crisis in Ontario because of neonicotinoid insecticides, and hence, their prohibition in agriculture is NOT necessary ! With prohibition, Ontario's agriculture industry WILL BE inevitably facing destruction since these insecticides are desperately needed to effectively and safely control damaging pests of crops. The neonicotinoid-hating Ontario Liberal government and fanatic-activists like Sierra Club are falsely alleging that these insecticides cause some bee losses. These losses are, in fact, the fault of the bee-keepers and their mis-management practices. THEY are responsible, and NOT neonicotinoid insecticides. Some bee-keepers have NO idea what they are doing, leading some observers to conclude that bee-keepers may NOT be competent to raise bees. Researchers have NOT identified a single cause of over-wintering honey bee losses. There is NO evidence to suggest a link between neonicotinoid insecticides and long-term honey bee losses. The weight of the scientific evidence clearly shows that neonicotinoid insecticides cause NO harm to bees. Most experts agree that, in recent years, honey bee decline is the result of a combination of factors, including bee-keeper incompetence in controlling parasitic mites and diseases. Conversely, agricultural businesses are competently using methods that minimize any direct exposure to bees, such as seed treatment. If we had less conventional neonicotinoid use in the environment, we would still have bee colony collapse disorder, because many bee-keepers are NOT competent to manage their hives. PROHIBITION WILL NOT SAVE BEES.

<http://tinyurl.com/pxqzh6m> <http://wp.me/P1jq40-2BA>

<http://wp.me/p1jq40-4WE> WILLIAM H GATHERCOLE AND NORAH G

<http://pesticidetruths.com/>