



Ontario court of appeal to hear grain farmers case on bee regs

By [Kelsey Johnson](#) | Jan 12, 2016 5:48 pm |

The Ontario Court of Appeal will hear from a group of Ontario grain farmers looking to have new pesticide regulations aimed at saving bees revoked.

In a release Wednesday, the Grain Farmers of Ontario said the court will hear their appeal March 9.

“We are pleased that the Ontario Court of Appeal has agreed to hear our case and to move quickly on this issue,” GFO President Mark Brock said.

Grain Farmers of Ontario – an industry group that represents the province’s 28,000 grain farmers – **filed suit** against the Ontario government in June over new regulations that restrict the use of neonicotinoid pesticides – a popular seed treatment widely used on corn, soybean and canola seed.

The regulations, **which took effect July 1**, aim to reduce the acreage treated with neonicotinoid pesticides by 80 per cent by 2017. The province’s regulations have been met with outrage from grain farmers, who argue the pesticides are essential to crop production.

Grain Farmers of Ontario had been hoping to stay what they say are “unworkable” regulations and have them dismissed, but that request was rejected by an Ontario judge in October. The group appealed the decision in November.

Neonicotinoids have triggered controversy in recent years – with some scientific literature linking the widely used pesticides to bee deaths.

But in an update last week, Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) found that a pesticide belonging to the controversial neonicotinoid group of seed treatments should not be considered a threat to pollinators after all.

The PMRA found Imidacloprid posed "no potential risk to bees" when used as a seed treatment. Seed treatments are a coating of pesticide applied to a seed before it is planted. The method is preferred over other application methods like foliar sprays – where pesticides are sprayed on top of crops and are not as easily contained.

While the PMRA's findings have been welcomed by grain farmers — including Grain Farmers of Ontario — they have been rejected by the Ontario Beekeepers Association.

In a statement, the Ontario Beekeepers Association said Health Canada's recent report "must not be interpreted as permission to continue the overuse of neonicotinoid pesticides that have been killing bees and damaging Ontario's beekeeping industry."

"Ontario beekeepers continue to experience lower honey yields, higher operating costs and higher colony mortality," says Tibor Szabo, president of the OBA said. "We categorically reject any notion that over-planting of corn and soy and the overuse of seed treatments with neonicotinoids are not contributing to the ill effects on our industry."

The U.S Environmental Protection Agency, Health Canada and the California Department of Pesticide Regulation are currently reviewing three neonicotinoid pesticides – Clothianidin, Imidacloprid and Thiamethoxam. The review began in 2012 and is expected to be completed by December 2017.