



CEI fellow says honeybees thrive amid neonicotinoid insecticide use

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The number of bee hives kept globally has grown from nearly 50 million in 1961 to more than 80 million in 2013. | [File photo](#)

A senior fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI) recently told *Crop Protection News* that a lawsuit filed against the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in an effort to heavily regulate -- or even ban -- the use of neonicotinoids could prove detrimental to all involved.

The suit filed by several beekeepers and private environmental organizations earlier this month alleges that neonicotinoids, which are neuro-active insecticides that coat entire seeds, should be labeled as pesticides by the EPA -- and regulated as such in an effort to protect bee populations.

“Banning neonicotinoids threatens agricultural productivity, resulting in higher food prices,” Angela Logomasini, a senior fellow in Environmental Risk, Regulation and Consumer Freedom at the CEI, told *Crop Protection News*. “In addition, bans are likely to harm honeybees and other pollinators as farmers may switch to more toxic chemicals to protect crops. In fact, farmers indicated in interviews with researchers from AgInfomatics that they would need to vastly increase pesticide use and use more toxic products if they lose access to neonics.”

Logomasini explained that citrus growers’ very survival depends on having effective treatments such as neonicotinoids “to address the Asian Citrus Psyllid, which feeds on fruit trees and transmits a bacterial disease called Huanglongbing (HLB). If allowed to get out of control, HLB will undermine fruit productivity and eventually destroy citrus trees within a few years.”

Logomasini said that in Europe, where neonicotinoids were banned in the 2014 planting season, farmers have experienced serious crop damage and increased use of other chemicals that are likely more dangerous for bees.

“The British government eventually allowed emergency spraying of neonicotinoids in July 2015, but much of the damage was already done,” she said.

Logomasini said based on her research, she has found that it is not necessary for the EPA to ban

neonicotinoids to protect bees.

“Current experience shows that neonics can be used strategically to protect crops with negligible impacts on honeybee populations,” she said. “Despite the fact that some beekeepers have had high annual losses, honeybees are doing well globally. In fact, (the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) data show that the number of bee hives kept globally has grown from nearly 50 million in 1961 to more than 80 million in 2013.”

With regards to evidence of this pesticide affecting honeybees, Logomasini argues that there is not a compelling body of evidence demonstrating that neonicotinoids present a serious threat to honeybee survival and these chemicals actually pose a lower risk than alternative pesticides.

“If neonicotinoids were a cause of colony collapse disorder (CCD), we would expect to see at least some correlation between their use and CCD, but no such pattern has been observed since their introduction in the 1990s,” Logomasini said. “Hive losses that some beekeepers have experienced in recent years result from a number of factors — particularly a number of diseases — that are not related to neonic usage.”

ORGANIZATIONS IN THIS STORY

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