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Pesticides Blamed for Declining Bee Populations (/full-blog/2013/08/pesticides-blamed-for-declining-bee.html)



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Image Source (<http://www.ascensionearth2012.org/2013/05/insanity-us-approves-bee-death.html>)

By: Maegan Pirtle, Staff Member

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of bees to our agricultural system. One-third of the food consumed by Americans benefit from bee pollination, and their efforts are responsible for \$15 billion in added crop value each year.[1] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftn1) It is no surprise then that much concern surrounds the not yet fully understood phenomenon in which entire colonies of bees suddenly die off. The occurrence is known as Colony Collapse Disorder, and it has pushed environmentalists and beekeepers to sue the EPA for approving pesticides that have been linked to decimated bee populations.[2] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftn2)

Scientists have not conclusively determined the cause of CCD, but some point to a group of pesticides known as neonicotinoids as the culprit.[3] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftn3) Citing numerous scientific studies that suggest a link between the pesticide and CCD, the European Union recently banned the use of neonicotinoids.[4] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftn4) Proponents of the ban

hailed the decision as a significant victory for declining bee populations.[5] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftn5) Critics, on the other hand, found the solution overly simplistic and argued that the ban was based on faulty science.[6] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftn6)

With concerns about CCD continuing to grow, a similar debate is happening in the United States. And while an EPA ban on neonicotinoids might be a good place to start, it is important to remember that much is still unknown about the exact causes of CCD. The ban will do little for other potential causes such as pathogens, viruses, and other environmental factors. Regardless of what the EPA ultimately decides to do about the use of these pesticides, we should be wary of myopic solutions that only address pieces of a complicated problem.

[1] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftnf1) Honey Bees and Colony Collapse Disorder, U.S. Department of Agriculture, <http://www.ars.usda.gov/News/docs.htm?docid=15572>

[2] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftnf2) James Gerken, Bee Death From Colony Collapse Disorder On The Rise As Researchers Point to Pesticides, The Huffington Post (March 29, 2013), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/29/bee-deaths-colony-collapse_n_2979959.html.

[3] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftnf3) U.S. Department of Agriculture, *supra* note at 1.

[4] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftnf4) Charlotte McDonald-Gibson, 'Victory for bees' as European Union bans neonicotinoid pesticides blamed for destroying bee population, The Independent (April 29, 2013), <http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/nature/victory-for-bees-as-european-union-bans-neonicotinoid-pesticides-blamed-for-destroying-bee-population-8595408.html>.

[5] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftnf5) *Id.*

[6] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftnf6) *Id.*

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