



Press Release

How Pesticides Used in Livestock Threaten Bees: Calling for a Real Consideration of Risks

For several years, episodes of bee mortality have appeared near animal breeding in different regions of France. To better understand these phenomena, the National Union of French Apiculture (UNAF), member of BeeLife, commissioned a report to draw up an inventory of insecticides used in cattle and sheep farming. The objective was to understand their mechanisms of action on bees, question the rules for their placement in the market and to measure the risks they pose for beekeeping activity. Even though the scope of the report has been limited to France, its findings point towards a need for better risk assessment, even at European level. Today, BeeLife and UNAF release the [English version of the report](#), which has been translated from its [original French version](#).

At the beginning of the winter of 2008-2009, beekeepers in Ariège reported severe mortalities in their colonies: more than 4,000 dead hives and whole apiaries decimated led to a strong suspicion of bee poisoning. However, these beekeepers, who practice transhumance in the high mountains, are located at considerable distances from any crops. Therefore, insecticides used for raising neighbouring flocks began to arise suspicion. Since then, mortalities in comparable situations have been reported on several occasions, as in Aveyron in 2010 or the Eastern Pyrenees during the winter of 2013-2014, affecting several hundreds of hives.

In light of this concerning situation, the UNAF commissioned the report '[How Pesticides Used in Livestock Farming Threaten Bees](#)'. An expert from the Scientific Research National Center (CNRS) directed the study. The report also counted with the support of the French Federation of Professional Beekeepers (FFAP) and BeeLife European Beekeeping Coordination. This report confirms the risks that pesticides used on livestock farms pose to bees and the lack of consideration of these hazards in product evaluations and the management of their use. The research reveals that:

- Insecticides used in livestock, for veterinary and biocidal purposes, are neurotoxic, sometimes systemic, and always harmful to bees.

- Bees are exposed to potentially harmful doses of these molecules through the contamination of water and livestock excrement.
- These issues are ignored when evaluating these products.
- There is a constant and worrying ignorance by public authorities regarding the pesticides used and their applied quantities in the farms.

For Jean-Marc Bonmatin, chemist and toxicologist from the CNRS, and responsible for directing the study, "the insecticides used in breeding are no more to neglect than those used in crop processing since they are the same. It is urgent to assess their uses, risks and impacts rigorously".

UNAF's administrator and scientific advisor, Antoine Caron, stated that "the lack of consideration of the risk of toxicity to bees and pollinators is a serious gap in the evaluation of pesticides used in breeding. The alarming decline of these insects must urgently integrate this risk into the assessment process".

The report points towards a need to better assess the impact of insecticides used in livestock. Although its scope has been limited to France, the president of BeeLife, Francesco Panella, affirms that "the disregard of the risks these insecticides pose to bees is irresponsible. We hope this report not only calls the attention towards an improved assessment of risks in France but that it also opens the discussion on existing conditions in the rest of Europe, particularly regarding the systematic use of these insecticides".

Based on the report's findings, partner organisations UNAF, FFAP and BeeLife are asking public authorities for real considerations of the risks that the toxicity of veterinary and biocidal products pose to pollinating insects and honeybees.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

BeeLife European Beekeeping Coordination is an association formed by professionals of the beekeeping sector from different countries of the European Union. Its main activity is the study of the impact on bees of environmental threats such as pesticides or genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

BeeLife works for the protection of bees based on the principle that 'bees serve as the canary in the gold mine', sounding the alarm that something is 'wrong in the environment'. Not least, bees create 30% of all our food by pollinating fruits,

vegetables and arable crops such as sunflower and oilseed rape, having an inherent value that the Coordination is working to protect.