



Plight of bees threatens food production say MEPs

Immediate action is required to tackle the drastic decline in bee colonies throughout Europe and the rest of the world, say MEPs. The decline in the number of bees poses a threat not just to honey production but to the pollination of plants and hence to food production. Parliament adopted a resolution on Thursday pressing the Commission to take action.

The resolution, adopted by 485 votes in favour to 13 votes against with 5 abstentions, calls on the Commission to use the CAP Health Check to put in place measures encouraging the creation of ecological recovery zones in parts of fields that are difficult to cultivate.

Extensive research needed

MEPs call on the Commission to immediately step up further research into the parasites and diseases, as well as other potential causes such as erosion of genetic diversity and cultivation of genetically modified crops, decimating the bee population, while making additional budgetary resources available for this research.

Research is also needed to establish whether there is a link between the use of pesticides, such as thiamethoxam, imidacloprid, clothianidin and fipronil, on bee mortality, say MEPs.

Finance package for beekeepers in difficulty

Parliament urges the Commission to propose a financial aid mechanism should also be provided for beekeepers in difficulty, and ask that Member States bring forward "immediate support" for the beekeeping sector.

Action on imported apiculture products

In response to apiculture products imported into the EU, MEPs consider that action should be taken to tackle unfair competition from products originating in third countries and that imported honey should be analysed to detect the possible presence of American foulbrood bacteria, a disease that affects honey bees.

Future legislation on bees

The House calls on the Commission and the Council to give due consideration to the health of bees, the possibilities for marketing bee products and the economic impact on the beekeeping sector in all discussions and future legislative steps concerning the cultivation of genetically modified crops in the European Union.

Worrying facts

Press release

A report in National Geographic published a few years ago stated that bee numbers had dropped by up to 50%. Three quarters of food production (76%) is dependent on bees and 84% of vegetables grown in Europe depend on pollination.

The threat to bees comes partly from the use of modified and treated seed, which has led to a reduction in pollen and nectar, and partly from the reduction in agricultural set-aside land.

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