

PRESS RELEASE

Friday 5 April 2013

BBKA Response to the EAC Report on Pollinators and Pesticides

The BBKA welcomes the publication today of the Environmental Audit Committee report on Pollinators and Pesticides. Not only does the report examine the possible role of neonicotinoid pesticides on honey bees and wild pollinators, but it also looks at the vital issues of habitat degradation and consequential poor forage availability. The sustained period of poor weather in 2012 and 2013 plus the ongoing problem of bee diseases remain at the forefront of beekeepers' minds but understandably are not covered by the report.

Amongst its many recommendations, the report urges Defra to introduce a moratorium on the use of three neonicotinoids on crops attractive to bees. Whilst the BBKA is concerned about the possible damage that these substances may be inflicting on pollinators, it notes that unequivocal field based studies have not been conducted and the evidence is incomplete. Perhaps more importantly, the BBKA does not wish to see any action taken that may in itself cause damage to pollinators for example by the inevitable re-adoption by farmers of older superseded and more hazardous chemical agents being re-employed in crop protection. Before any such moratorium is imposed, a full and thorough risk and impact assessment must be carried-out to ensure that we do not end-up with a worsened situation. We require there to be assessments made and assurances given that substitute substances pose no increased risk to honey bees. We are not aware of alternative technologies with a lower risk compared to neonicotinoids being available currently, although integrated pest management may prove helpful.

The BBKA believes that the principles and practice of Integrated Pest Management should be promoted in all areas where there is a requirement to control a pest or disease. In this we agree with the report and if pesticides have to be used then it is essential that the users of the products whether they are farmers or gardeners should follow good stewardship practices, for example reading and applying carefully, the instructions on product labelling.

As noted, the authors of the report still appear to be unable to demonstrate deleterious effects of neonicotinoids on honey bees managed by beekeepers in the UK and we renew our call for further investigations to reassure us that these products can be used safely with regard to honey bees.

The report discusses the use of the precautionary principle and it is obvious from the report that clarification is required on what is meant by the precautionary principle and how it is to be applied with regard to pesticides in the UK and Europe.

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The British Beekeepers Association

BBKA – supporting bees and beekeepers



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It was largely through the actions of members and supporters of the BBKA that funding for research into the decline of pollinators was provided via the Insect Pollinators Initiative (IPI). The IPI includes some work on pesticides which the BBKA called for. The BBKA is principally concerned about the honey bee, but even though a significant proportion of the research funding which has gone into the IPI is allocated to work on non-honey bee pollinators, we still welcome the work as the knowledge and benefits arising from the research should also be of benefit to honey bees.

- Ends -

About the BBKA:

The **BBKA** is a registered charity no 212025 www.bbka.org.uk. It has more than 24,000 members who are amateur beekeepers each keeping an average of six hives in 2012.

Press Contact: see http://www.bbka.org.uk/news_and_events/press_office/

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