

*September 18, 2013*

Dear Members of the Agricultural Advisory Committee,

In light of the fact that you, the London Agricultural Advisory Committee, has recently taken on the subject of urban food production, we the representatives of organizations such as, Food Not Lawns, Members of Community Gardens London (with approximately 600 members), and other citizen growers, see the need to work more closely with groups such as this one.

In order to have a clearer understanding of the decisions which affect food production practises, both rural and urban, we would like to develop a dialogue with you because food production affects all of us. As with any growing and handling of food, there are several issues which could be addressed. For example, there is a nation-wide and global concern about the links between Colony Collapse and neonicotinoids. Our organizations are also very concerned about this issue, and we are hoping that this committee is also concerned, and is, or will be looking at this situation very carefully.

In the EU, a two year moratorium has been placed on some neonicotinoids because they have found evidence that shows a linkage between the use of these pesticides and the extreme decline of the bee population. If the twenty-eight nation state of the EU is responding, it must be a dire situation!

In this past year here in Canada we have seen major bee die-offs. There is mounting concern from agencies such as the Ontario Ministry of Health to beekeepers associations to the Grain Farmers of Ontario; so much so that even Dupont Pioneer in Chatham, has recently announced the sale of neonicotinoid-free seeds. People are taking action. According to Dave Harwood, technical service manager of Pioneer, the Grain Farmers of Ontario have requested a neonicotinoid-free seed.

We hear daily about the plight of the bee keepers who are losing their livelihood. We have watched them give emotion-laden reports about this disaster. It is heart wrenching for them and their families. I'm certain any farmer on this committee would leave no stone unturned to look for causes of lost livelihood.

London is surrounded by farm land, and this problem will impact our air, soil and health, and the health of bees and other pollinators as well. As urban growers, we feel that we should be part of the discussion. We feed ourselves and we rely on bees for pollination. As well, we feel that on the topic of the use of these strong pesticides, that this Committee should examine the issue very closely and that every caution should be taken when using these products. Some studies show the neonicotinoids can remain in the soil for decades. We need to ask what this could do to the soil, water, and the over-all ecosystem. Surely this will affect wildlife and our own health. We have enough to deal with regarding health issues, with general pollution, food additives, and other factors. We need to leave a better legacy for our children.

Please, include the urban community in your discussion, and in the advice you pass on to the Planning and Environment Committee. Thank you.

Sincerely, Margo Does