

December 18/13

Mr. Fletcher, chair, and members of the Agriculture Advisory Committee:

Further to the issue of neonicotinoid pesticides

The National Farmers Union (NFU) has also responded to the PMRA interim report on neonicotinoid pesticides. In its report, *Action to Protect Bees from Exposure to Neonicotinoid Pesticides*¹, the NFU joins the Ontario Beekeepers Association in underscoring the key phrase that leads the PMRA interim report concerning neonicotinoid pesticides and honeybee deaths: "... current agricultural practices related to the use of neonicotinoid treated corn and soybean seed are not sustainable".

NFU states that the PMRA recommendations do not reinforce its own key statement.

The National Farmers Union is committed to the protection of biodiversity and advocates for agricultural practices that are in all ways sustainable and built on the principles of food sovereignty. Following this, it recommends:

- a five-year moratorium on the use of neonicotinoid pesticides in *all* forms on *all* field crops
- more long term studies of neonicotinoids' effects on honeybees, other pollinators, and other invertebrates and vertebrates
- a serious look into the effects of combined pesticides on pollinators and other critters, in both immediate and sub-lethal and cumulative amounts

The NFU paper gives an explanation of how neonicotinoids work in simple language. What could be more clear - and serious - than to know that neonicotinoid pesticides don't just kill bees and other pollinators outright, but cause insects' nervous systems to "*malfunction continuously and irreversibly*" and to be told that even one kernel of neonicotinoid treated corn can cause reproductive abnormalities in birds?

The NFU comment also reminds us that:

- neonicotinoids and their break-down components (metabolites) leach into water in soil and watercourses and are themselves harmful
- the use of neonicotinoids on all crops - instead of on insect-infested crops - has already resulted in pesticide resistant strains of pests (and there will be more)
- overuse of neonicotinoids adds to the stressors already on honeybees and other critters (loss of biodiverse habitat, climate change, predators increasing due to insects weakened immune systems)
- long term, ecosystem research is needed.

The NFU comments that a moratorium on neonicotinoids is the best use of the "precautionary principle" - not waiting until every study is in before taking common sense action for ecosystem health.

I request that the Agricultural Advisory Committee make its own statement about the need for a moratorium on neonicotinoid pesticides, urge the Planning and Environment Committee to do the same, and that both committees begin to look at how pesticides are used inside London's boundaries and how their effects on all inhabitants of its ecosystems will be kept healthy.

Sincerely,

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¹ NFU press release and link to pdf located at url <http://www.nfu.ca/story/nfu-calls-precaution-and-independent-research-neonicotinoid-review-report>