



Save Europe's bees

Commission: Commission de l'agriculture et du développement rural

Bee mortality is rising while the number of beekeepers in Europe is declining, all of which could have a serious impact on food production since most plants and crops are pollinated by bees. The EP Agriculture Committee therefore wants the EU to step up support to the beekeeping industry when the common agricultural policy is next revamped.

With 76% of food production and 84% of plant species dependent on pollination by bees, the committee approved a draft resolution on Wednesday calling on the Commission to increase aid to the beekeeping sector in the common agricultural policy (CAP) after 2013, by reviewing legislation and increasing financial support as well as investment in research.

New labelling rules, further research on bee mortality and the inclusion of bee diseases in EU veterinary policy are among recommendations in the resolution, which was adopted by 30 votes to 0 with 1 abstention.

MEPs also urge the Commission to set up an action plan for tackling bee mortality that would include promoting pollinator-friendly farming practices, and to maintain and improve existing support programmes, which are due to expire in 2012.

Changes in labelling needed to guarantee quality

With imports accounting for over 40% of the honey sold in Europe, the committee wants EU food quality policy legislation to be updated to improve rules on labelling of origin so to avoid misleading information on blends of honey from EU and non-EU countries. Moreover, products should be labelled as 'honey' only if at least 50% of the sugar originates from honey, say MEPs.

Better disease control

EU veterinary policy needs to be modified so that it can tackle bee mortality, for example through effective measures to control bee diseases such as the Varroa mite. In addition, access to medicines in the whole of the European Union should be improved through EU funding.

Independent research to inform the public

The draft resolution, which still has to be approved by the full Parliament, urges the Commission to support independent research on bee mortality and ensure that any data on the effects of GMO crops and pesticides on particular species of bees are made public. Lastly, the committee suggests revising the rules on pesticides and plant protection products to allow risk assessments of bees' exposure to such substances.

Committee on Agriculture and Rural development

In the Chair: Paolo de Castro (IT, S&D)

Procedure: motion for a resolution

Plenary vote: November 11 (Strasbourg)

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