



PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 31.03.2014

Bees on the spotlight in Brussels: Feverish start to April with debate controlled by agro-chemical industry interests

The first week of April 2014, Brussels hosts a series of conferences dealing with bees and pollination. One of these, the Bee Week will take place for the third consecutive year at the European Parliament¹. Another conference targets pollinators in agriculture². A third one, on Bee Health, will be organised by the EU Commission³.

Bee Life European Beekeeping Coordination, PAN Europe, CEO and Slow Food ask the European authorities, parliamentarians and citizens to remain critical about the positions expressed through these conferences. Indeed, two out of the three conferences are highly influenced by the agro-chemical industry and other organizations with an interest in down-playing the impact of current agricultural practices on bee health.

Once again, the 'Biodiversity network for bees' is a partner of the Bee Week event chaired by MEP Gaston Franco at the European Parliament, from 31st March to 2nd April. According to its website, this French network "*brings together beekeepers, farmers and professional organisations. The network is supported by companies of the sector*"⁴. In fact, the network is made up of mainly cereal cooperatives and companies such as BASF, which support an agro-industrialised model that is not compatible with bees and other pollinators.

The network proposes that farmers sow flowering strips at the margins of their fields as the solution to the yearly death of thousands of European hives⁵. But meanwhile, new independent scientific studies are published every month that point at pesticides as a major cause of bee decline. The network unfairly blames farmers for misusing pesticides, suggesting the chemicals are safe for pollinators.⁶

From 1st to 3rd April, the conference 'Pollinators in agriculture' organised by the Association of Applied Biologists will also take place in Brussels. Most of the sessions will deal with nutrition and landscape. One limited session discussing pesticides and bee health will be taken up mainly with presentations from industry or industry-related scientists. The most renowned independent scientists on bee toxicology will be absent from the panel.

Finally, on the 7th of April, a conference organised by the European Commission promises to bring new information on the advances of EU bee health on the table.

¹ http://www.ebcd.org/en/EP_Intergroup_CCBSD/A_New_Spring_for_Bees.html

² <http://www.aab.org.uk/contentok.php?id=166&basket=wwsshowconfdets>

³ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/information_sources/ahw_events_en.htm

⁴ www.jacheres-apicoles.fr/index/chap-qui_sommes_nous/

⁵ http://www.reseau-biodiversite-abeilles.com/?page_id=277

<http://www.beeodiversity.com>

⁶ <http://www.jacheres-apicoles.fr/168-la-surmortalite-des-abeilles-faits-et-chiffres.html>

Francesco Panella, President of Bee Life said: *"In the European public debate on pollinator protection, it is essential to distinguish between the actors, and to keep a critical eye on how representative and independent they are. Bee Life, PAN Europe, CEO and Slow Food are highlighting today the enormous efforts made by the agro-chemical industry to steer the debate on the health of honeybees and other pollinators: they are making it a simple problem of nutrition and avoiding the massive problems caused by the toxicity of their products, in order to protect their financial interests: They want to preserve the wasteful and damaging high-input agricultural model which is incompatible with long term human and bee health."*

PAN-Europe

Martin Dermine
Honeybee project coordinator
Rue de la pépinière 1
1000 Brussels
+32 486 32 99 92
martin@pan-europe.info

Slow Food

EU Liaison Office
Rue d'Edimbourg 26
1050 Brussels
+32 0485 32 89 43
m.messa@slowfood.it

Bee Life European Beekeeping Coordination

Francesco Panella
President for Bee Life
Place croix du Sud, 4
1348 Louvain-la-Neuve
+32 10 47 16 34
Coeur@bee-life.eu

Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO)

Nina Holland
Agribusiness campaign
Rue d'Edimbourg 26,
1050 Brussels
+32 2 8930930
nina@corporateeurope.org