

# Bee Life

*Activity report 2014*

*Beekeepers  
protecting bees and  
their environment*



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# I. Message from the President

**FRANCESCO PANELLA**

*Bee Life President*



**Let's us work together...**

**For bees!... for life!**

Across Europe, beekeepers, are just one small part of the farming economy. But beekeeping involves a huge number of enthusiasts, whose work supports a range of vital ecological processes, which regulate the entire economy of Nature and our environment.

Increasingly, more and more people understand the central role, which the little honeybees play as pollinators, and the huge contribution which they make, in supporting entire ecosystems and the natural resources on which we all depend for our survival.

Today, it is undeniable that bees personify the essential 'Common Good' which is required for life on Earth to exist, namely: «Fertility».

Thanks to the bees, humanity is finally realising that Fertility is the essential 'Common Wealth', which we must defend at all costs, with all our strength. We must defend Fertility 'tooth and nail', regardless of the bee-stings. But it is not just a matter of defending this 'Common-Wealth' of Nature's fertility and productivity; we first have to recover and restore it, from its present degraded state.

We must defend our natural 'Common Wealth' from the powerful economic forces which seek to exploit it, and from continuous attack by the corporate profiteers, who, by their endless ecological crimes have eroded the land's fertility, have contaminated our food with pesticides and undermined the future of humanity.

Several European beekeeping associations have found a way to overcome their limitations by joining together, to invest in a common European struggle. The union of these various small beekeeping groups has brought forth proposals that can, and should help us, to «Change ... and win!"

This rising demand for change, has come, not merely from the tragedy of mass bee-deaths, witnessed every day: in farmers' fields and in our apiaries; it has also arisen in response to the increasing number of scientific studies, which confirmed that systemic pesticides are the major cause of: the mass-deaths of bees, the decline of pollinating insects and the disappearance of wildlife from our countryside.

Those, who are responsible for the "Communal Effort", that supports the ongoing work of Bee Life, are not merely investing in the future of bees and beekeeping; above all, they are investing in the life of future generations. More and more beekeepers, as well as beekeeping and agricultural associations, have joined us, in our campaign struggles. Sadly, however, many others are still reluctant to invest their energy and funds in the communal work of Bee Life.

I hope that this report on the success of Bee Life in 2014, will raise awareness of the vital importance of this project and encourage others to contribute to the investment needed to build an even stronger and more effective Bee Life team for the future.

## II. A Summary of Bee Life's Work in 2014



### **Campaign for a Total Ban on the use of Neonicotinoids and Fipronil.**

Beekeepers have witnessed the toxic effects of these systemic insecticides on bees for over 20 years; increasingly, many scientific studies have confirmed the threats which these pesticides pose for Europe's biodiversity. In 2014, Bee Life encouraged the European institutions to work towards a "Neonicotinoid-free Europe" and a farm-landscape that is equally free from the toxic effects of Fipronil.



### **Stop the marketing of toxic pesticides to bees and to the ecosystem.**

The Pesticide Risk Assessment Method, used to quantify the risk which pesticides pose to bees and the wider environment, is the key regulatory lever, which can prevent the release to the market, of toxic pesticides that kill bees. For many years, the Risk Assessment Methodology, used by regulators, has been framed, manipulated and controlled by the pesticide industry. It is absolutely crucial that the methods used to evaluate the risk of pesticides must be reviewed and reformed, at any cost. Since 2010, Bee Life has campaigned to make the European Risk Assessment for pesticides, truly independent; to update and improve the methodology, in the light of new scientific knowledge. Thanks to the efforts of Bee Life, in co-operation with the responsible European authorities, a new Risk Assessment Methodology Proposal is now on the table. During 2014, Bee Life has sustained this pressure for the adoption of a new pesticide Risk-Assessment Methodology in Europe. Additionally, Bee Life has provided detailed comments to the competent European authorities in regard to pesticides which are currently being evaluated.



### **Campaign for A Farming-Model that respects wildlife, bees and pollinators.**

If Europe is to restore and protect the health and viability of bees and pollinators, we need fundamental changes to our agricultural model and system of food-production. Bee Life has begun to address this vital issue. In 2014, Bee Life produced a dossier highlighting the biological needs of bees in rural areas, when set against the regulatory framework of the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Bee Life's participation in the Civil Dialogue Group on Agriculture and Rural Development, at the European Commission, is another way in which we co-operate with different stakeholders, to achieve practical improvements for bees at European level.



### **Monitoring and Reporting on Bee Mortality in Europe.**

Bee Life plays a key role with the competent European authorities in helping to clarify 'the big picture' in respect of the ongoing pattern of bee-deaths in Europe. Bee Life has proposed improvements to the system of monitoring bee-colony-losses, in order to provide the institutions with a better understanding of the scale of bee-losses suffered by beekeepers in the field. With other partners, Bee Life has also proposed a new Citizen Science Tool called 'Bee-2bees'; this is a grass-roots, self-help system for monitoring the health of bee colonies throughout Europe. Improved monitoring of bee health is crucial for informed decision-making and to implement any future action plan to protect pollinators.



### **Raise awareness on honeybees: their way of life, how they support Nature and Humanity.**

Bee Life, serves as a vital link between farmers, beekeepers, the European institutions and beekeeping associations, contributing to: public consultations, conferences and events. In addition, this year, Bee Life created and published three online-videos, documenting the views of a wide range of expert stakeholders in relation to bees. Photo-messages were also collected at beekeeping events. These messages confirm the iconic status of bees, for the citizens of Europe, as a living symbol for the health of Nature.

Bee Life aims: to inform the public about the difficulties which beekeepers suffer in the field; to seek solutions to the long-term problems of bee-deaths; to prevent the loss of bee colonies in the future.



### **Transparency; Environmental accountability; Economic power and Conflict of Interest.**

As far as possible, Bee Life tries to inform the public and the competent authorities about the public relations strategy and commercial pressure, which the pesticide companies use, to keep their pesticides on the market. Along with its partners, Bee Life helped to nominate the agro-chemical companies, as producers of neonicotinoids and fipronil, in the Public Eye Awards 2014. Bee Life also supported various campaigns, including the STOP TTIP campaign, which would have the power to ignore current pesticide regulation systems.

# III. Missions, visions and expertise

## PROTECT BEES TO SAFEGUARD OUR HEALTH AND FOOD

Bee Life European Beekeeping Coordination AS-BL (Bee Life) is an association of beekeepers and national associations of farmers. Bee Life currently has 13 members from six EU Member States: Belgium, France, Austria, Italy, Luxembourg and Spain. Our members have worked together since 2009, through the informal working group CoEur (European Beekeeping Coordination). As of 2013, Bee Life European Beekeeping Coordination became an official beekeeping partnership. The purpose of Bee Life is to improve environmental quality for bees and wild pollinators.

Bee Life currently has just one part-time scientific-technical advisor and one part-time communication staff.

Bee Life actions are motivated by a shocking insight, namely: that the agricultural landscape of Europe is no longer healthy or safe for bees, pollinators or wildlife. Bee Life believes in alternatives for EU healthy and fair farming.

We currently have a farm-environment saturated with hundreds of bee-toxic chemicals; insecticides, herbicides, fungicides and hormone growth regulators. Ironically, all of these pesticides are perfectly 'legal' and licensed under the current regulatory model.

For the last 20 years, Europe has witnessed the death of millions of bee colonies, as a direct result of this bee-toxic-environment, which the pesticides industry has imposed on farmers.

## BEES, PILLAR OF BIODIVERSITY AND GUARDIANS OF HUMAN HEALTH

Bee Life's vision is based on four principles:

1. Bees and other Pollinating insects, are the pillars which support the edifice of biodiversity. Pollination is the very foundation of food security in Europe since without bees and pollinators, most



*Honey-bee, thermometer of our health and environment*

*Photo : F. Panella*

fruits, vegetables, nuts, berries and wildflowers, cannot be produced.

2. The health of bees and other pollinators is synonymous with the health of the environment. Bees are thus «environmental sentinels» - highly sensitive indicators of 'the state of the environment'; when bees are dying on a large scale, something is fundamentally wrong.

3. Honeybees are excellent indicators of biological health and environmental quality .

They help us to monitor and measure environmental quality and teach us many lessons about how we should manage our environment.

4. Of all the pollinating insects, honeybees are the best-known and longest-studied species, in terms of : biology, ecology, pathology and toxicology. Bees are also the most 'monitored and observed ' pollinators, thanks to beekeepers and the economic benefit which bees bring to humans. However, bees also share the same habitats and have similar ecological needs to other wild pollinator insects, like butterflies, moths and hoverflies. If bees are being killed it is certain that hundreds of other insect pollinators are also being affected, even if we are not aware of their deaths.



*Membres de Bee Life*



## PUTTING BEES BACK AT THE HEARTH OF OUR FARMING SYSTEM

In response to the well-documented decline of bees and pollinators throughout Europe, the key mission of Bee Life is to identify the environmental threats that affect them and to propose constructive solutions.

Bee Life pays special attention to environmental threats linked to agriculture.

Over the last 20 years, experience in the field has confirmed that pesticides applied to farmland poses the highest risks for pollinators. Bee Life aims to encourage and recreate a more pollinator-friendly farming for the whole of Europe.



*Rucher dans un verger de cerisiers*

## BEE LIFE, A DIALOGUE BETWEEN BEEKEEPERS, SCIENTISTS AND EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS

Bee Life serves as an essential link between beekeepers, scientists and policy makers. Bee Life monitors, gathers and analyses information on bees and their environment.

This work happens at three levels:

- Gathering field information from Bee Life's members that identify problems in their region.
- Reviewing new scientific publications
- Monitoring policy discussions and relevant European legislation.

When specific problems are detected, Bee Life reports its observations and conclusions to the European authorities. Bee Life also tries to raise awareness among the wider public, through various channels including: websites, reports, articles and videos.

Bee Life aims to ensure the implementation of policies which foster the protection of pollinators, by promoting environmental quality and biological health.

This work is equally based upon: the direct experience of beekeeper in the field as well as on a strong monitoring and analysis effort of current scientific studies, validated by independent scientists.

## A CENTRE OF TECHNICAL EXPERTISE SINCE 2009

As mentioned above, Bee Life was formally incorporated in 2013. However, its Members have been working together since 2009. For almost six years, Bee Life has played a major role in seeking to improve the legal framework of the Pesticide Directive (EC) 91/414 working towards the new Regulation (EC) 1107/2009 and its final implementation.

We have also proposed technical improvements to Pesticide Risk Assessment in relation to bees. We informed the European authorities about several gaps in this dossier. Similarly, the authorities have been warned about the lack of transparency and the questionable participation of pesticide industry representatives in the framing of the risk assessment methodology. Subsequently, the scientific agency for European Food Security, EFSA has published new Guidelines, proposing new assessment methods. However, much more work needs to be done in order to implement EFSA's proposals.



*Bee on curcubit flower*

*Photo: CARI*

Finally, Bee Life has played a very important role by informing the European institutions on the extreme risks which neonicotinoid insecticides and fipronil pose for: bees, pollinators and entire ecosystems. Bee Life has started to work on the Common Agricultural Policy towards the development of farming systems that are more pollinator friendly.

## IV. Pesticides and bees : a difficult co-existence

The relationship between bees and pesticides presents us with a profound dilemma; namely how can pesticides and bees co-exist for the benefit of key stakeholders. Pesticides are increasingly toxic; the neonicotinoids are, 8 000 to 11 000 times more toxic to bees than DDT was in 1946 (Bonmatin 2013).

In addition, their systemic characteristics (absorption of the toxic molecule within the entire plant-structure) and high solubility in water, generate a greater potential for multiple routes of toxic exposure . Bees can be exposed to these pesticides through: nectar, honeydew, pollen, dust in the air, water, soil, etc. Moreover, the toxic-exposure-time for bees can be greater, because of neonicotinoids' high persistence in soil, water and plants. Finally, bees in the field are exposed to a chemical cocktail, of dozens of: insecticides, herbicides and fungicides, that can be hundreds, or even thousands of times more toxic

### NEONICOTINOIDS AND FIPRONIL : POLITICAL AND SCIENTIFIC FOLLOW UP

Since the early 1990s, many field observations and scientific publications have confirmed the toxic effects of neonicotinoids and fipronil for bees.

At the European level, actions and responses to this scandal have started to emerge.

Based on a mandate from the European Commission, the European Food and Security Agency (EFSA) evaluated over one hundred scientific publications dealing with the effects of neonicotinoids, as well as the authorisation dossier for these molecules. The conclusions were published in 2013: neonicotinoids and fipronil were confirmed as posing high risks for honeybees and wild bees. In direct response, the pesticide industry increased its political lobbying and public relations pressure, in order to neutralise EFSA's judgment.

However, based on the EFSA judgment, the European Commission suspended the use of three neonicotinoids: imidacloprid, thiamethoxam and clothianidin (1) as well as fipronil (2). The suspension is currently in place for certain uses and some crops. It came into effect on December 1st 2013 for neonicotinoids and December 31st 2013 for fipronil.

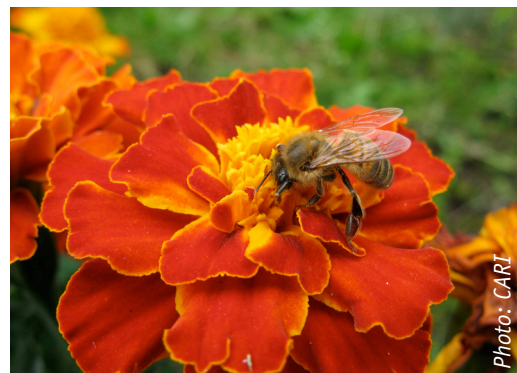
During 2014, Bee Life has continued to raise awareness of the European Commission, DG SANCO (DG Health and Consumers).

The main comments regarding this first year of suspension are:

#### *A full ban: an emergency*

The European Commission's suspension of three neonicotinoids and fipronil is a key step in the right direction. However, this partial measure still leaves too many pesticides contaminating our environment, despite: their known persistence in soil; their solubility in water; and their tendency to diffuse and migrate through water and soil. It is imperative that we work towards a comprehensive ban of these dangerous toxic molecules.

Moreover, two more neonicotinoid molecules remain freely available on the European market: thiacloprid and acetamiprid. These insecticides



Bee on marigold flower

Photo: CARI

(1) Commission implement  
Regulation (EU)  
n°485/2013

(2) Commission implement  
Regulation (EU)  
n° 781/2013





Photo: V. Girolami

*Contaminated soil and dust emission during tillage or treated-seed seedling pose problems for pollinators*

were already authorised until December 31st 2014; but their approval was then extended until April 30, 2017, considering the time needed for the re-evaluation of the dossier. The manufacturers of thiacloprid and acetamiprid must now provide studies of how these pesticides affect bees, meeting the requirements of Regulation (EU) 283/2013. These studies must include data on acute and chronic toxic effects on bees; larval-toxicity and sublethal effects. Bee Life has asked that these active substances should be evaluated according to the new EFSA guidelines and that the assessment should use the same criteria as that for the evaluation of those neonicotinoids which are currently suspended.

#### ***One neonicotinoid replaces another; but we need a complete paradigm shift***

When imidacloprid, clothianidin and thiamethoxam were banned in 2013, some member States, such as France, Italy, Spain authorised the use of thiacloprid-coated seed-dressings in their territories. Thiacloprid, which is less toxic to bees than the other three neonicotinoids, but is used in higher quantities, was not suspended. The use of thiacloprid soon caused problems during corn-planting in Italy for example in 2014 (3). Bee Life argues that merely shuffling the pack of neonicotinoid pesticides is not a solution to the problem of bee deaths. Europe needs a complete paradigm-shift; we need to move: away from the prophylactic-use of pesticides, on all crops at all times, as a chemical insurance; rather we should move towards a more sustainable crop protection system, based on crop rotation, Integrated Pest Management and an ethos which says: "for our health, only use pesticides when absolutely necessary".

Most neonicotinoids are routinely applied as prophylactic seed-dressings, i.e. as a «chemical insurance policy» to prevent pests, without knowing in advance if the pests are actually present, nor if they would cause actual damage. Indeed, most seeds arrive at the farm-gate, already coated with the neonicotinoid insecticide; farmers have little choice in the matter - they must buy what the seed company provides.

In this context, Bee Life launched a series of educational initiatives, including the publication of a cartoon (4); participation in conferences promoting alternatives to pesticides such as the "Symposium for Feeding Europe with Fewer pesticides" (5) in Brussels, November 2014.

#### ***The race for national legal exemptions***

Unfortunately, temporary exemptions for neonicotinoid uses were allocated by the Commission to Member States such as Romania (6), Finland and Germany. The UK chose not to accede to farmers demands for a neonicotinoid-exemption on oilseed rape in 2014, but only thanks to the pressure of British public opinion. Bee Life urges that all pollinators, beekeepers and European citizens should have the right to be protected from neonicotinoids in the same way.

#### ***Legal intervention***

After the European Commission decision to suspend neonicotinoids and Fipronil, BASF (fipronil producer), Bayer (imidacloprid and clothianidin producer) and Syngenta (thiamethoxam producer) attacked the Commission's decision in the courts. In this context, Bee Life, in collaboration with BugLife, Greenpeace, and Pesticide Action Network Europe intends to intervene in court, in support of the Commission's decision, and in opposition to Bayer and Syngenta.

(3) <http://www.mieliditalia.it/index.php/api-agricoltura-ambiente/notizie-api-e-pesticidi/81564-allarme-rosso-morie-api-mais-notamment-en-Tasmanie>

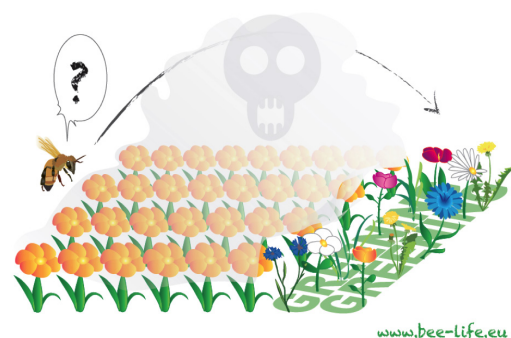
(4) [www.bee-life.eu/fr/art](http://www.bee-life.eu/fr/art) <http://bee-life.eu/fr/article/76/icle/61/>

(5) <http://www.pan-europe.info/Activities/Conferences/141104/Program>  
Symposium Feeding Europe with fewer pesticides.pdf

(6) <http://bee-life.eu/fr/article/76/>

(7) <http://bee-life.eu/en/article/73/>

(8) <http://www.tfsp.info/worldwide-integrated-assessment/>



*The flower strips promoted by the CAP greening can lead to 'trap effects' for pollinators*



*World Integrated Assessment confirms that neonicotinoids and fipronil pose risks for the entire food chain and environment*

The World Integrated Assessment of the impact of systemic pesticides on biodiversity and ecosystems (WIA) (7) was published in 2014. This study made a synthesis of more than 800 published peer-reviewed studies. It is the single most comprehensive study of neonics ever undertaken, is peer reviewed, and published as open access. The aim of the task force was to evaluate the global impact of systemic pesticides on biodiversity and ecosystems. They analysed the uses of these insecticides, the contamination of water, soil, plants, metabolism and the impact they pose to invertebrates, vertebrates, ecosystem and farming. Bee Life has supported the scientific work developed by the Task Force on Systemic Pesticides. Eight scientific publications (8) resulted from this five-year project and conclude that systemic pesticides pose for: bees, biodiversity and ecosystems.

## MONITORING PESTICIDES WHICH HARM BEES

As part of the active-substances assessment, or re-assessment procedures, Bee Life has sent comments to the Commission or EFSA, regarding the risks posed to bees by the following toxic mole-



*Dilutions preparation to perform toxicology tests*



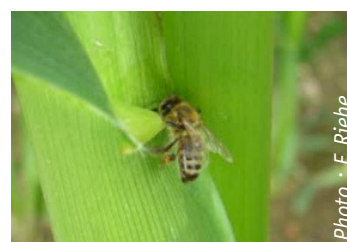
*Toxicological test in semi-controlled conditions*

cules: gamma cyhalothrin (pyrethroid insecticide, highly toxic to bees), sulfoxaflor (neonicotinoid insecticide, highly toxic to bees), cyantraniliprole (insecticide), metalaxyl M (fungicide which is a known synergist of neonicotinoid insecticides).

Bee Life has highlighted toxic substances such as flupyradifurone (Bayer CropScience) presented as a substitute for imidacloprid, as well as cycloxypride, a precursor of imidacloprid developed in China. These substances, which are currently used outside the European Union, pose high risks to bees. Bee Life campaigns to prevent these molecules from entering into Europe.



*Photo : E Riebe*



*Photo : E Riebe*

*Bees drinking guttation droplet water from herbaceous plants (left) and corn (right)*

(9) <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/fr/efsajournal/pub/3295.htm>

## A NEW RISK ASSESSMENT SCHEME: IMPLEMENTATION

Regulation (EU) 283/2013 and 284/2013 defines data to be included in the pesticide authorization or extension dossiers (active substances and plant protection products, respectively). The EFSA guidance document (9) provides methodologies to be followed when calculating the required data. The guidance was published in July 2013, in response to the mandate given to EFSA by the European Commission.

EFSA's proposal must now be approved by the European Commission (DG SANCO) and EU Member States. Some Member States are reluctant to support EFSA, claiming that the guidelines are too theoretical and complicated to implement. This has pushed back the date for any decision into 2015, despite the training sessions organized by the Commission for national risk-assessors.

A new working group, APITOX was established within the COLOSS network. APITOX is composed of independent researchers who specialize in the issue of pesticide-toxicity to bees. Their work includes, among other topics, EFSA guidance on implementation. Bee Life's scientific and technical advisor participate in this working group.



*Participants at the Scientific Workshop Apitox in Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium)*

Bee Life has participated in the discussion on the risk assessment guidance at the symposium «Pesticides and Beneficial Insects» organized by IOBC (International Organization for Biological and Integrated control) in Namur.

## ADVISORY GROUP ON ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH

Bee Life has attended meetings of the Advisory Group on Animal and Plant Health at the European Commission (DG SANCO). This forum includes discussions between the Commission and stakeholders. Topics covered are diverse: monitoring of bee-health, neonicotinoids, risk-assessment methodologies. In 2013, Bee Life participated in meetings on the suspension of neonicotinoids and fipronil.

In 2014, a private initiative called 'Bee Health Initiative' was proposed by ECPA (representatives of pesticide manufacturers at European level). Bee Life has participated in the first two meetings. The objectives of this initiative have yet to be clearly defined. Currently, the project is supervised by the Advisory group of the European Commission (DG SANCO) on animal and plant health.



*Bee Life participates in public consultations and debates with the European institutions (EFSA, Parliament, European Commission...)*



## V. Bee health

### EUROPEAN MONITORING ON BEE HEALTH

#### *Bee Health, a European Conference*

The 'Bee Health' conference (10) organized by the European Commission provided an opportunity to present the first results of the European monitoring on bee health. This monitoring has quantified and analysed colony-losses in different European countries. Winter losses have risen to 33% of all bee colonies in Belgium. Although data on pathogens in hives was collected, the European monitoring methodology does not take into account pesticides data (11). Meanwhile, the study has revealed that the main bee pathogens are not the key causal-factors in honeybee mortalities.

The conference brought together a large number of bee specialists and stakeholders linked to bee health. Bee Life took this opportunity to conduct video-interviews with many expert participants. The result of this work was the production of three short videos: entitled «Pollinator-friendly farming: a must» (12). These were made globally available online.



Photo : C. Cardoso

a. European Commissioner for Health, Tonio Borg at Conference on bee health

b. Filming of the video «Pollinator friendly farming: a must

Bee Life also participated in the scientific meetings on bee health organised by ANSES (French Food, Health, Environment and Labour Security Agency). The main topics discussed were the EPILOBEE report and the advance of the parasite *Aethina tumida* across Italy.



*Bee2bees, online monitoring tool, following colony mortality*  
[www.bee2bees.eu](http://www.bee2bees.eu)

#### *Bee2bees*

Bee Life has participated in the creation of the so-called 'Bee2bees' tool. This initiative arose from the Association for Citizen Science. Bee2bees is a public tool for monitoring colony losses through direct beekeeper participation. By supplying data, direct from their own apiaries (private data remains confidential), beekeepers help to track bee colony populations. When sudden losses are identified, Bee2bees enables beekeepers in the area to be alerted. The Bee2bees tool can be used anywhere in Europe but it can also bring benefits to beekeepers in other parts of the world. If the use of Bee2bees spreads to be used on a wide scale by beekeepers, via smart-phones, tablets and computers, this tool will quickly reveal areas where problems arise.

(10) <http://sanco-bee-health-conference2014.eu/index.jsp>

(11) <http://bee-life.eu/fr/article/69/>

(12) <http://bee-life.eu/fr/article/78/>

## VI. Social and environmental responsibility, transparency and conflict of interest

Since its inception, Bee Life has monitored the news-media, regarding: the problems of transparency; the pesticide-industry-lobby and conflicts of interest related to bees and pesticides. These issues often occur in the context of research, public services and conferences organized at national or European level. This is certainly the case for issues such as pesticide risk assessment, sustainable agriculture and bee health. It is vital to inform the public and European authorities about these conflicts of interest and the veiled activities of the pesticides-lobby. In 2014, the following points were communicated:

- Bee Life published a report with Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO) on the research center OPERA, which acts as a front-group for the Pesticide industry, in the debate on bees and pesticides, at European level (13).
- Bee Life coordinated the nomination of Syngenta, Bayer and BASF for the Public Eye Awards 2014. This brought massive public support for the bees; more than 60,000 signatories, awarded these companies the dubious 'honour' of second position, in terms of social and environmental irresponsibility (14).
- In a letter co-signed by several associations, Bee Life denounced the MEP McIntyre resolution which questioned the neonicotinoid suspension (15).
- Participation at the conference «A New Spring for Bees» in which Bee Life emphasised the need to rely on independent research and the need to pay attention to the media-manipulations of the pesticide industry lobby (16).
- Bee Life asks Syngenta and Bayer to stop killing bees, during their Annual meetings (April 29, Basel, Switzerland and April 29, Leverkusen, Germany) (17).
- Just before the European elections Bee Life supported the 'Politics for people not for profit' campaign (18).
- Participation at the Conference "Transparency and public health: how accessible is scientific data ?" in Brussels. Bee Life asked the Ombudsman to pay attention to the need for data-transparency on matters of human health, and in respect of plant and animal health (19).
- Support to the campaign STOP TTIP (20).
- Joint participation to the EFSA public consultation on transparency (21).

(13) <http://bee-life.eu/medias/temp/opera-final-website.pdf>

(14) <http://bee-life.eu/en/article/65/>

(15) [http://www.greens-efa.eu/fileadmin/dam/Documents/Letters/Group\\_Others\\_letters/140307-letter\\_to\\_mep\\_on\\_mcintyre.pdf](http://www.greens-efa.eu/fileadmin/dam/Documents/Letters/Group_Others_letters/140307-letter_to_mep_on_mcintyre.pdf)

(16) [http://bee-life.eu/en/article/68/on\\_mcintyre.pdf](http://bee-life.eu/en/article/68/on_mcintyre.pdf)

(17) <http://bee-life.eu/en/article/68/>

(18) <http://bee-life.eu/en/article/72/>

(19) <http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/activities/calendarevent.faces/en/864/html.bookmark>

(20) <https://stop-ttip.org/fr/>

(21) <http://bee-life.eu/en/doc/591/>



Bee Life asks neonicotinoid producing firms to take their responsibilities regarding bees and society.



A very warm welcome to Bee Life, a new supporter of the Stop-TTIP ECI Alliance

Support to the campaign STOP TTIP [www.stopttip.org](http://www.stopttip.org)



# VII. Farming and pollinators: towards a new agricultural model

## COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY

Many environmental risks to bees arise from current agricultural practices. Therefore Bee Life has started working more directly on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

During 2014, Bee Life participated in five civil-dialogue groups of the European Commission (DG Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI)): (1) Animal products; (2) Arable crops; (3) CAP; (4) Environment and climate change; (5) Direct payments and greening.

Participation in these meetings gives Bee Life the opportunity to raise the awareness of DG AGRI and participants in respect of bees and bee health. Participation allows us: to network with other stakeholders, to provide field information on bee health and propose solutions to implement the new CAP. Bee Life believes that honeybees are an excellent bio-indicator to help us assess the sustainability and environmental impacts of CAP. Bee Life has developed a dossier on the CAP as it affects pollinators, emphasising the role of bees as a bio-indicator of environmental quality.

Several letters were sent (22) and actions were taken to lobby against the use of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers on Ecological Focus Areas (EFA) (23). EFAs have been defined in the new CAP, as a condition for receiving a portion of the direct payments. However, the Commission left the Member States entirely free to decide about EFA management and crops.

(22) [http://bee-life.eu/médias/temp/ngo\\_policy\\_cap\\_com\\_delegated\\_acts\\_implementation.pdf](http://bee-life.eu/médias/temp/ngo_policy_cap_com_delegated_acts_implementation.pdf)

(23) <http://bee-life.eu/en/article/66/>

(24) <http://bee-life.eu/fr/article/80/>

## DOSSIER : CAP AND POLLINATORS

Convinced that the new CAP provides an opportunity to develop a more pollinator friendly farming in Europe, Bee Life, Slow Food and PAN Europe have published a dossier entitled "CAP and Pollinators" (24).

This dossier includes: recommendations for the implementation of the CAP 2014-2020; a selective analysis of the CAP regulations (based on pollinator needs) and examples of pollinator friendly initiatives.

Honeybees, in addition to their invaluable role as pollinators in food production and ecosystem-services, can help us evaluate the sustainability of our farming system. Thanks to their biological needs and their way of living, they serve as an excellent bio-indicator; bees offer us a 'litmus test' for environmental quality.

As part of a continuous improvement in the conception and implementation of the CAP, this dossier is addressed to several stakeholders - policy makers, public administrations, farmers organizations, NGOs - concerned with the fate and the protection of our food systems, the quality of our environment and obviously, pollinators.



## GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS

For Bee Life, many of the genetically modified organisms (GMOs) on the market today bring unacceptable environmental contamination (transgenes, pesticides...). They do not offer us the sustainable solutions which were promised when industry marketed them. On the contrary, this technology creates enormous social and political problems in many countries. Moreover, GMOs do not offer better crop-yields than non-GM crops and traditional crop-breeding (25).

Decisions regarding the European dossier, ongoing for several years, were taken in 2014:

- Honey and coexistence Directive (26): The vote in plenary on January 15 2014 declares that pollen is a constituent of honey.
- Maize TC 1507 (27): February 13, 2014, a majority of Member States voted against GM maize TC 1507 being allowed on the European territory. However, the qualified majority was not reached. Therefore the decision remains in the Commission hands.
- The vote on GMO legislation (28).

As a member of the steering committee, Bee Life participated in the launch meeting of the Agricultures project (Vila Nova in la Gertru, Spain). This research project aims to make accessible more empirical data to initiate the Norwegian act of biotechnology. In addition to technical and biological criteria, it takes into account ethical, social and sustainable considerations for GMOs assessment.

Bee Life participated in the EFSA public consultation on GMOs: «Guidelines for agronomic and phenotypic characterization of genetically modified plants.»

The conference «GMOs and pesticides: a time bomb» held in Brussels April 25, 2014 was the opportunity to attend a presentation by several experts on GMOs, including Professor Seralini. The conference demonstrated that Risk Assessment Methodologies for pesticides and GMOs entail similar problems. Tremendous improvements are urgently needed, particularly in relation to the implicit social risks for stakeholders such as farmers and beekeepers.

(25) Bond, O. (2003)  
*Les OGM face aux réalités agricoles, La recherche*

(26) <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2014-0028+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

(27) <http://www.infogm.org/5642-Europe-autorisation-pour-la-culture-du-mais-OGM-TC1507-entre-les-mains-de-la-Commission>

(28) <http://www.infogm.org/5752-ogm-fin-du-debat-sur-les-interdictions-nationales>



*Bee on male maize flower*

Photo: E Bruneau

## VIII. Raising awareness

### EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND NETWORK CONSOLIDATION

In order to inform the public, mainly: beekeepers, European institutions and NGOs, Bee Life regularly publishes news-releases and policy-positions on its website (28) and on its Facebook page (29).

This year's Bee Life launched a Photo Action (30) encouraging the public to send photos-messages defining the meaning of bees for them personally. This action has demonstrated the close relationship between bee health, environment health and human health. It raised awareness of the central role which pollinators play in food production and environmental quality.

Year after year, Bee Life strengthens its network and collaboration with NGOs working at European level for the implementation of sustainable food and farming in connection with nature. These links are created in particular by our participation in conferences, advisory groups, joint projects, etc.



*Photo-messages received, Bee Life Photo action*

In 2014, Bee Life has collaborated with organizations such as Slow Food, PAN Europe, Greenpeace, Buglife, Client Earth, SumOfUs. The Public Eye Awards brought together more than 50 associations around bees and pollinators.

### POLLINATOR FRIENDLY AGRICULTURE : A MUST

Bee Life was pleased to present three online videos (31): Neonicotinoid Insecticides: A justified Ban, Warnings from the field, A future for both Bees and People.

The videos are currently available online in English and French. This trilogy includes testimonials from expert stakeholders who are responsible for keeping our bees healthy. They share their ideas for the creation of pollinator friendly farming.

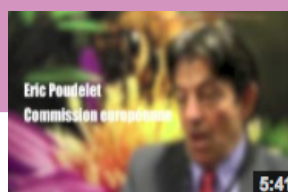
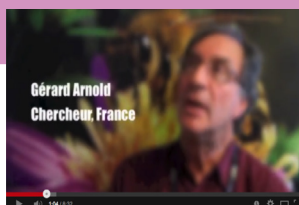
Scientists and beekeepers present their views on the effects of neonicotinoid insecticides on bees. From a field-perspective, the video raises public awareness on bee health: it shows how bee populations have declined from year to year, and it illuminates the environmental landscape in which the bees and beekeepers must survive today. Finally, future perspectives and hopes are presented in order to move towards a farming-system that should respect the needs of bees and pollinators, while ensuring the production of good food, in both quantity and quality.

(28) [www.beelife.eu](http://www.beelife.eu)

(29) <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Bee-Life-European-Beekeeping-Coordination/228160887382539>

(30) <http://bee-life.eu/fr/article/71/>

(31) <http://www.bee-life.eu/fr/article/78/> et [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtt4m300tIBQyPce\\_OIj0Eg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtt4m300tIBQyPce_OIj0Eg)







*Pollination dependent fruit - Exhibition in Colmar (France)*

In addition to the events already mentioned, Bee Life also took part in the following events:

- Pollinators in Agriculture in Brussels (Belgium) from 1 to April 3 (32)
- Apiculteuse movie,

Brussels 19 April (33)

- COLOSS Meeting (34) in Murcia (Spain) September 7-8
- Scientific Congress Eurbee in Murcia (Spain) from 9 to 11 September
- Rural Development Programs in Action post 2014: How Can they contribute to a Healthier environment? Brussels on 15 September
- Congress of Hispanic beekeeping in Santiago de Compostela (Spain) October 3-5
- Participation to the conference ICPPR, Gent (Belgium) from 15 to 17 September.



*ICPPR participants (Ghent, Belgium)*

## IX. FINANCING

Currently, the work of Bee Life's staff is funded entirely by the financial contributions of its members (via their annual fee) and their funding of specific projects. Consequently, Bee Life is trying to diversify and increase its financial income, in order to ensure the sustainability of its continuing work.

Bee Life wants to thank the SRABE (Royal Beekeeping Society of Brussels and surroundings) for the donation and the confidence it has given to Bee Life. Our association is also grateful to the Bee Life campaign going on in Italy led by Bee Generation, as well as the campaign 1 SMS to bees, one smile to life led by the CARI in Belgium. These citizen actions, support and motivation are essential for Bee Life to continue its work and for bees to continue represented at European level.

## INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Bee Life maintains contact with its members in many ways: e-mailing, skype, telephone.

Our website also maintains a library and database which provides a multitude of scientific publications on environmental threats to bees and pollinators.

A monthly Flash-news allows Bee Life's members to follow the project's activities: European news, the latest scientific publications and a calendar of European events.

Once a year, our General Assembly gives us an opportunity to highlight Bee Life's work.

This year the meeting was held in Brussels, on February 17, 2014. The Board of Directors meets twice a year. Bee Life's most recent Board of Directors Meeting was held in Colmar (France) on October 10, 2014, taking advantage of the Congress of the French beekeeping.



(32) <http://www.aab.org.uk/contentok.php?id=166&basket=www-showconfdets>

(33) <http://vimeo.com/78621417>

(34) <http://www.coloss.org>



