

**Question for written answer E-000710/2015  
to the Commission**

Rule 130

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Subject: Pollinator decline threatening Europe

Roughly 90% of the Member States' territory has been described as countryside, and more than half of EU citizens live in rural areas. The agri-food sector is important to the EU's economy and for its self-sufficiency. Agriculture is also a major employer, as it provides work for 14 million people within the EU.

Europe's rural areas and natural environment are, moreover, valuable in themselves because they give Europe and its regions their distinguishing characteristics. From the point of view of each region's identity and sources of livelihood it is essential for the distinctive natural environment to be preserved unaltered.

The EU is committed to protecting its abundant biodiversity. In preserving this abundance, bees and pollinators have a central role to play, given that many plants cannot exist without them. In Europe there are 4 000 plants that depend on pollinators, and one third of our food needs pollinators in order to be produced.

Pollinator numbers have, however, been declining over wide areas since the 1990s. The numbers of domesticated bees kept in Europe have, since 1985, fallen by 25% and in some regions dropped by half. The decline has been caused primarily by pesticides and other chemicals used in crop growing. Land use decisions, industrial emissions, and climate change also affect the conditions for pollinators.

What will the Commission do to protect bees and other pollinators? Will it take measures requiring farmers, landowners, and the rest of society to behave in a manner more friendly to pollinators and in that way safeguard the European ecosystem and the place of pollinators within it?