



2017/2115(INI)

24.10.2017

OPINION

of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

for the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

on prospects and challenges for the EU apiculture sector
(2017/2115(INI))

Rapporteur: Mireille D'Ornano

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety calls on the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Emphasises that beekeeping as an economic and social activity plays a crucial role in the sustainable development of rural areas, creates jobs and provides an important service to the ecosystem in the form of pollination, which contributes to the improvement of biodiversity by maintaining the genetic diversity of plants;
2. Considers that farming and beekeeping share the same land and are mutually beneficial, for which reason cooperation between the two sectors needs to be boosted to further synergies and reduce risks;
3. Highlights the importance of pollination for food security in Europe and worldwide, given the impact of bees and pollinators (domestic and wild) on farming, agricultural production, biodiversity and environmental sustainability;
4. Points to the recent research conducted by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), which shows that increasing the density and variety of pollinating insects has a direct impact on harvest yields and, as such, can help small-scale farmers increase their productivity by an average of 24 % overall;
5. Recognises that while crop pollinators, including honey bees, pollinate over 80 % of all crops and wild plants and contribute at least EUR 22 billion each year to the European agricultural industry, bee populations are falling at an alarming rate;
6. Draws attention to the varying size of the honey bee population in different agricultural areas: the population is growing in some honey-producing countries, while other countries are facing a decline;
7. Is deeply concerned that livestock mortality in some countries has reached levels higher than 50 % and warns that the fall in the honey productivity of hives may be concealed by the statistical increase in honey bee populations over recent decades;
8. Considers that the deterioration of the environment owing to the growing impact of human activity, the spread of intensive farming, the increasing use of plant health products and climate change, are causing high mortality rates among bees and a drastic reduction in the number of bee colonies;
9. Stresses that many of the predicted consequences of climate change, such as a temperature increase, a change in precipitation patterns and extreme or less predictable weather events, will have an impact on pollinator populations;
10. Draws attention to the lack of sufficient information and precise figures on the situation of pollinators at global level, and on their number and diversity;
11. Regrets the lack of regional or international programmes to monitor the current status and trends with regard to pollinators;

12. Stresses the importance of preserving the variety of the bee gene pool, which is a vital resource for ensuring that bee populations are able to adapt to environmental changes and threats to their health;
13. Recognises that a bee's resistance is weakened considerably by cumulative chemical exposure, leaving them unable to deal with stressors such as wet years, a lack of nectar, diseases and parasites;
14. Emphasises that the use of plant protection products in agriculture should be regarded as a key factor affecting bee health;
15. Stresses that the long-term effects of systemic plant protection products are underestimated; believes that use of plant protection products should be taken into account in order to clarify the extent to which they play a role in bee health; welcomes the recent adoption of a pilot project on environmental monitoring of pesticide use through honey bees;
16. Calls for the EU to formally adopt the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) guidance on the risk assessment of plant protection products on bees in order to determine the level of 'acceptable risk' required under Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009;
17. Stresses the need to apply the precautionary principle in order to protect pollinators in general, both domestic and wild;
18. Recalls Directive 2009/128/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 establishing a framework for Community action to achieve the sustainable use of pesticides, in particular Article 14, which makes it mandatory for all farmers to apply the general principles of integrated pest management on their farms from 2014, and Article 9, which places a general ban on aerial spraying, thereof;
19. Points out that special attention must be paid to the use of plant protection products in the neonicotinoid family (clothianidin, thiacloprid, imidacloprid, thiamethoxam), phenylpyrazole (fipronil), pyrethroids and active substances such as chlorpyrifos and dimethoate, with lethal effects (mortality owing to the acute or chronic toxicity of active substances in plant protection products) or sub-lethal effects (on the immune system or the behaviour of bees), directly or via contaminated water, droplet guttation, nectar or pollen that may cause digestive and hormonal disruption;
20. Maintains that neonicotinoid-based pesticides have a particular role to play in the worrying decline in bee populations across Europe, as can be seen from a range of international studies which have formed the basis for petitions from citizens bearing hundreds of thousands of signatures from all over the continent;
21. Points to the growing body of scientific research connecting the extinction of bee colonies to the use of neonicotinoid pesticides;
22. Points out that the EU has introduced temporary restrictions on the use of four neonicotinoid insecticides (clothianidin, thiamethoxam, imidacloprid and fipronil) in order to mitigate the impact on bees;

23. Calls for a definitive ban on the placing of any neonicotinoid insecticides on the European market;
24. Calls on the Commission to propose legislation banning the production, sale and use of all neonicotinoid-based pesticides throughout the EU, with no derogations and as a priority measure, in order to protect bee populations;
25. Welcomes the Commission's proposal, therefore, for a comprehensive ban on clothianidin, imidacloprid and thiamethoxam, and calls on the Member States to fully support, implement and uphold this ban;
26. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to accelerate the evaluation, authorisation, registration and monitoring of the use of low-risk plant protection products of biological origin while continuing to ensure a high level of risk assessment in order to offer an even wider range of alternatives to farmers;
27. Suggests that the country or countries of origin of honey should be listed on the label in a clear manner, in order to protect consumers' rights and to help fight against fraudulent practices;
28. Notes that Directive 2014/63/EU stipulates that the country of origin in which the honey has been harvested must be indicated on the label, where the honey originates in one Member State or third country; acknowledges, however, that further action is required to tackle fraud in the field of bee products and to address the unfair competition represented by adulterated 'honey';
29. Calls for continual checks to be carried out on the quality of honey imported from third countries whose legislation permits the treatment of bee colonies with antibiotics;
30. Notes the importance of a robust budget allocation for national beekeeping programmes and, given the importance of the sector to agriculture overall, calls on the Commission to ensure its prominence in future agricultural policy negotiations in terms of support, research and innovation, and beekeeping education programmes;
31. Takes the view that EU farming policies, and primarily the common agricultural policy (CAP), must incorporate the most recent scientific evidence on the benefits of and threats to populations of bees and wild pollinators;
32. Calls for greater financial support to be given to increasing the level of knowledge among beekeepers in the areas of bee diseases and bee breeding in order to ensure that beekeeping remains part of agricultural production and to care for the landscape into the future;
33. Underlines that the EUR 36 million allocated to beekeepers are paltry when set against the challenges faced by the sector and cannot possibly provide effective and long-lasting solutions to the problems they face;
34. Welcomes the fact that the compulsory greening measures of the amended Direct Payment Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013), in particular with regard to crop diversification and ecological focus areas, could contribute to a better environment for

bees; stresses, however, that bees and other pollinators must be at the heart of the EU food production system and that more needs to be done to establish agricultural systems that respond to the needs of pollinators, while guaranteeing food production that contributes to the well-being of EU citizens; adds that the greening of the CAP is inadequate in that it does not alter its overall aims;

35. Calls on the Commission, when reviewing the CAP post-2020, to give priority to measures that guarantee the environmental integrity required to ensure the optimum state of health of the bee population;
36. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to use bees as an indicator of environmental quality and as an instrument for assessing the effectiveness of the implementation of the CAP objectives, specifically via residue analysis and the botanical diversity of pollen sampled in beehives and other beekeeping matrices/products;
37. Urges the Commission to make progress on the implementation of the pilot projects on bees and other pollinators as indicators of environmental and habitat health;
38. Welcomes the successes of the ongoing EU programmes such as SmartBees (Sustainable Management of Resilient Bee Populations) and calls for further commitment to protecting the biodiversity of wild bees and local breeds, and thus also preventing unbalanced concentration on the breeds that are most commonly kept today: Carnica, Ligustica and Buckfast;
39. Calls on the Commission to ensure that farm subsidies from the various CAP budget lines take account of bee-friendly practices, for example ecological focus areas or growing wild flowers favoured by bees on fallow land;
40. Calls for a considered procedure to expand the list of invasive plant species that could lead to a reduction in the diversity of bee pastures in the EU;
41. Calls on the Commission to set up an EU bee health surveillance and monitoring programme coordinated by Member States, with the aim of understanding factors affecting bee health and monitoring them over the long term;
42. Recognises that not all countries have a beekeeper and beehive registration system that would facilitate the monitoring of developments in the sector, the market and bee health;
43. Calls for the expansion and increased use of cutting-edge information technologies that could help to simplify the process of identifying bee colony diseases;
44. Underlines in particular the role of research relating to the causes of the large-scale reduction in the immunity of bee colonies, which is a worrying phenomenon, and of common action when seeking appropriate treatments and measures against bee parasites (in particular the Varroa destructor mite); calls for research into the impact of importing live queen bees from third countries;
45. Calls on the Commission to increase the level of support for honey bee health-related

research under the next multiannual financial framework (MFF) and to focus the research on technological developments, and in particular on the impact of environmental factors on the bee colony immune system and their interactions with pathologies, on establishing sustainable agricultural practices, on promoting non-chemical alternatives (i.e. preventative agronomic practices such as crop rotation and use of biological control) and, in general, on further encouraging integrated pest management techniques;

46. Believes that authorised medicines for bees are in short supply; notes that it is difficult to tell which molecules each Member State authorises and that few new products are in development;
47. Notes that there are no common EU standards for beekeepers;
48. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop good practice guides, in conjunction with the farming and beekeeping sectors, that will promote synergies between the activities and encourage use of the best techniques available;
49. Calls on the Commission to promote sustainable agricultural practices under the CAP, to encourage all farmers to employ simple agronomic practices in line with Directive 2009/128/EC and to strengthen agri-environmental measures specific to the beekeeping sector, in the spirit of the new EU Biodiversity Strategy; calls on the Member States to lay down agri-environmental measures geared towards apiculture in their rural development programmes and to encourage farmers to engage in agri-environmental measures supporting ‘bee-friendly’ grasslands on field margins and employ an advanced level of integrated production, taking a holistic approach to farming and using low-risk biological control methods where possible;
50. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop, in conjunction with the farming and beekeeping sectors, a labelling system promoting the establishment of a responsible production system for bees;
51. Calls for increased public and private funding for research and development on improved practices in the field of organic farming;
52. Welcomes the ongoing trend for urban beekeeping and calls, at the same time, for close, mandatory integration of regional beekeepers’ associations and the authorities, and for minimum standards to put a stop to abusive husbandry practices and prevent the wilful spreading of disease and illness among bee populations;
53. Calls for support for and the promotion of national and international activities for young beekeepers in view of the high average age of beekeepers in the EU.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	19.10.2017
Result of final vote	+: 38 -: 12 0: 9
Members present for the final vote	Margrete Auken, Pilar Ayuso, Zoltán Balczó, Ivo Belet, Simona Bonafè, Biljana Borzan, Lynn Boylan, Paul Brannen, Soledad Cabezón Ruiz, Birgit Collin-Langen, Miriam Dalli, Angélique Delahaye, Mark Demesmaeker, Stefan Eck, Bas Eickhout, José Inácio Faria, Francesc Gambús, Elisabetta Gardini, Julie Girling, Sylvie Goddyn, Françoise Grossetête, Andrzej Grzyb, György Hölvényi, Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Jean-François Jalkh, Benedek Jávor, Karin Kadenbach, Kateřina Konečná, Urszula Krupa, Jo Leinen, Norbert Lins, Rupert Matthews, Joëlle Mélin, Miroslav Mikolášik, Gilles Pargneaux, Pavel Poc, Frédérique Ries, Daciana Octavia Sârbu, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Claudiu Ciprian Tănăsescu, Nils Torvalds, Adina-Ioana Vălean, Damiano Zoffoli
Substitutes present for the final vote	Mireille D'Ornano, Herbert Dorfmann, Eleonora Evi, Anja Hazekamp, Jan Huitema, Gesine Meissner, Ulrike Müller, Younous Omarjee, Gabriele Preuß, Christel Schaldemose, Bart Staes, Keith Taylor, Claude Turmes, Tiemo Wölken, Carlos Zorrinho
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Olle Ludvigsson

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

38	+
ALDE	Frédérique Ries
ECR	Mark Demesmaeker
EFDD	Mireille D'Ornano, Eleonora Evi
ENF	Sylvie Goddyn, Jean-François Jalkh, Joëlle Mélin
GUE/NGL	Lynn Boylan, Stefan Eck, Anja Hazekamp, Kateřina Konečná, Younous Omarjee
NI	Zoltán Balczó
PPE	Herbert Dorfmann, José Inácio Faria
S&D	Simona Bonafè, Biljana Borzan, Paul Brannen, Soledad Cabezón Ruiz, Miriam Dalli, Karin Kadenbach, Jo Leinen, Olle Ludvigsson, Gilles Pargneaux, Pavel Poc, Gabriele Preuß, Christel Schaldemose, Daciana Octavia Sârbu, Claudiu Ciprian Tănăsescu, Tiemo Wölken, Damiano Zoffoli, Carlos Zorrinho
VERTS/ALE	Margrete Auken, Bas Eickhout, Benedek Jávor, Bart Staes, Keith Taylor, Claude Turmes

12	-
ALDE	Jan Huitema, Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Gesine Meissner, Ulrike Müller, Nils Torvalds
PPE	Ivo Belet, Birgit Collin-Langen, Angélique Delahaye, Francesc Gambús, Elisabetta Gardini, Norbert Lins, Annie Schreijer-Pierik

9	0
ECR	Julie Girling, Urszula Krupa, Rupert Matthews
PPE	Pilar Ayuso, Françoise Grossetête, Andrzej Grzyb, György Hölvényi, Miroslav Mikolášik, Adina-Ioana Vălean

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention