

More chemophobia from the EU: banning pesticide to save bees?

By *ACSH Staff* — April 29, 2013

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The regulators in Europe continue to ban chemicals at the drop of a rat. In the latest instance, the head of the European Commission has decided to take it upon himself to ban a class of pesticide called [neonicotinoids](#), on the slimmest evidence that this class of chemicals might have contributed to the loss of bee colonies, known as colony collapse disorder.

The 27 countries of the EU failed to agree on a majority vote for the ban, so the head of the EC, Tonnio Borg, has indicated the ban will go into effect in December of this year, by his edict (termed technically a moratorium, the effect will be the same as a ban). The consensus of scientific studies point to a virus spread by a parasitic mite called the Varroa as a prime suspect in fueling the decline in bee colonies, but given Europe's devotion to the precautionary principle, wherein even a suspicion of adverse effects of a chemical is generally enough to initiate stringent regulation, the momentum for a neonic ban proved irresistible, despite statements in [opposition](#) by, for example, the British Beekeepers Association.

The subject of bees, their health, and their value to agriculture and nutrition is quite significant: Bees are important pollinators of flowering plants, including many fruit and vegetable crops. A 2011 United Nations report estimated that bees (and other pollinators) do work worth 153 billion euros a year to the human economy. Substantial loss of such activities would possibly have a devastating effect on food production, so the issue is of more than theoretical import. Given the proclivity of EU's hyper-precautionary Commission, a reversal of this decision is highly unlikely, but perhaps science will prevail if enough expert opinion can be transmitted to the EC and its director, Borg.

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