

Pesticide linked to bee collapse may pose more risks: Pure junk from the EU and the NYTimes

By ACSH Staff — April 9, 2015



For some reason, or perhaps not, safe and effective modern pesticides

of the neonicotinoid class (neonics) have had a target painted on them by anti-chemical activists based in Europe, for about a decade now. Ironically, these chemicals were developed in response to (baseless, but politically potent) claims of adverse health effects of older classes of pesticides. And, indeed, the neonics became very popular among farmers for their safety and efficacy against common pests.

Then, beginning around 2009, a campaign focused on their alleged harms to honeybee populations began to gain activist, media and popular attention (but having no direct impact upon their actual users: beekeepers and farmers, until the regulatory axe swung). This led to EU restrictions on several of the most commonly used chemicals, thanks to the precautionary principle, which (in the presence of mere concern or suspicion of harmful effects) requires proof of safety, an impossible task. These restrictions remain in effect even though the evidence clearly shows that bee colony populations suffer from episodic collapse with dramatic decrements in number of bees every few years, followed predictably by a resurgence: none of it having anything to do with the application of neonics. (The makers of neonics, Syngenta and Bayer CropScience, are suing the EU Commission to remove the ban as being unsupported by science).

Seeing the loss of this issue, the same bunch of anti-pesticide crusaders seem to have convinced an organization called the European Academies Science Advisory Council (EASAC) that neonics threat extends beyond their alleged bee effects, but adversely impact sustainability and biodiversity. An article in today's [New York Times](#) [1] (*Pesticides Linked to Honeybee Deaths Pose More Risks, European Group Says*) attempts to gin up fears about these chemicals by completely ignoring the facts exonerating neonics from bee colony collapse disorder:

An influential European scientific body said on Wednesday that a group of pesticides believed to contribute to mass deaths of honeybees is probably more damaging to ecosystems than previously thought and questioned whether the substances had a place in sustainable agriculture.

Believed by chemophobic activists, and the New York Times, apparently. The EU ban is up for

review this year, and our EPA is also re-reviewing its license for these chemicals. The EASAC report was prepared to provide EU officials with their recommendations for how to proceed. Here is an example of their rigorous studies:

A growing body of evidence shows that the widespread use of the pesticides has severe effects on a range of organisms that provide ecosystem services like pollination and natural pest control, as well as on biodiversity.

The Times article paraphrases thusly: Predatory insects like parasitic wasps and ladybugs provide billions of dollars worth of insect control, they noted, and organisms like earthworms contribute billions more through improved soil productivity. All are harmed by the pesticides. They said a farming approach known as integrated pest management, which takes a more natural approach to insect control, would allow for a sharp decrease in their use.

ACSH's Dr. Gil Ross had this comment: This is another classic example of twisting the facts towards attaining a pre-ordained conclusion (note their recommendation for 'natural' pest control methods to replace chemicals. Brilliant). In this instance, this so-called science council clearly decided, who knows when, that neonics had to go, and they likely targeted their ostensible effects on those poor bees. However, when the data failed to support bee harm, they did a tricky shift worthy of Steph Curry on the court, now condemning neonics for vague greeniac issues instead, hoping that their fellow-chemophobes on the EU Commission will take the bait. And, sadly, I wouldn't be a bit surprised. Too bad for EU agriculture.

COPYRIGHT © 1978-2016 BY THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SCIENCE AND HEALTH

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2015/04/09/pesticide-linked-to-bee-collapse-may-pose-more-risks-pure-junk-from-the-eu-and-the-nytimes>

Links

[1] http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/09/business/energy-environment/pesticides-probably-more-harmful-than-previously-thought-scientist-group-warns.html?_r=0