

In first, Ontario may regulate bee-killing pesticides

November 25 2014



A bee queen (white dot) stands amongst other bees on September 9, 2014

Canada's Ontario province announced Tuesday plans to restrict the use of controversial pesticides believed to be responsible for mass deaths of bees, in order to safeguard crops.

The restrictions are opposed by the chemical industry which says [neonicotinoid pesticides](#) are vital for protecting corn and soy crops from

insects.

The pesticides are less harmful to people and the environment than other chemicals, the [chemical industry](#) says.

Ontario could become the first jurisdiction in North America to regulate neonicotinoid pesticides, while Europe is halfway through a two-year moratorium on their use.

Bee deaths in Ontario reached a record 58 percent last winter, and the government says this group of [pesticides](#) is at least partly to blame, putting crops and honey production worth about Can\$923 million (US\$820 million) annually at risk.

"Improving pollinator health is not a luxury but a necessity," said Ontario Environment Minister Glen Murray.

The government said in a statement it will aim for an 80 percent reduction in the number of acres planted with neonicotinoid-treated corn and soybean seed by 2017.

Public consultations on the proposal are set to begin soon.

If approved, the new rules will be in place by July 1, 2015, in time for the 2016 agricultural planting season.

This action comes after the federal Pest Management Regulatory Agency linked bee deaths in Canada to the planting of corn and soybean seeds treated with neonicotinoids.

Neonicotinoids disrupt bees' ability to feed, navigate and reproduce, making them more susceptible to bacterium, virus, or microorganisms that cause disease, the agency reported.

Ontario crops of apples, cherries, peaches, plums, cucumbers, asparagus, squash, pumpkins, and melons rely on pollinators such as bees to grow.

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