

Bad weather causing 'catastrophic' French honey harvest

June 25 2019



Bees are vital for growing the world's food as they help fertilise crops by transferring pollen from male to female flowers

Alarmed French beekeepers and farming groups warned Tuesday of a "catastrophic" honey harvest this year due to adverse weather.

"For honey producers the season risks being catastrophic. Bees are collecting nothing!" French farming [union](#) MODEF said in a statement.

"In the hives, there is nothing to eat, beekeepers are having to feed them with syrup because they risk dying from hunger," added the union, which represents many small farms in honey-producing regions.

Henri Clement, secretary-general for the National Union of French Beekeepers (UNAF), said that by June his members had normally harvested 40-50 percent of their annual output, but they had collected very little so far.

He blamed the weather after a highly changeable winter which saw frost in many regions damage acacia trees, which bees like, followed by a rainy spring.

"We've had catastrophic weather conditions," Clement said. "We've been alarmed for a while now about the impact of climate change which is having a major impact on production."

The onset of intense summer heat in France, which could lead to record temperatures being set this week for the month of June, is another source of worry.

"We're waiting to see because the season could recover, but the heatwave that is coming could really hit harvests," Clement added.

In recent years, bee populations around the world have been dying off from "[colony collapse disorder](#)," a mysterious scourge blamed on mites, pesticides, virus, fungus, or some combination of these factors.

The insects are vital for growing the world's food as they help fertilise crops by transferring pollen from male to female flowers.

The European Union is gradually restricting the [use of pesticides](#) that are known to be harmful to bees and France introduced even stricter rules in August last year, leading to complaints from some farmers' groups.

The pesticides, known as neonicotinoids, are based on the chemical structure of nicotine, and attack the central nervous system of insects.

Bees make honey by sucking out nectar from flowers which they then transfer by mouth to other bees inside the hive.

The sugary golden liquid is used as a food store by the colony.

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