



August 7, 2013

Dear friends,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you, farmer to farmer, about the OBA's request for a suspension on neonicotinoid pesticides for field crops.

As someone whose family is still farming and who is running a large beekeeping operation, I understand full well the challenges we all face to make a living, to provide a future for our children, to be good stewards of the land and contributing members of the community.

Our decision to call for a suspension of these pesticides was not taken lightly or made easily. We had hoped that Best Management Practices might be effective, and we developed tools and partnerships to that end. Unfortunately, even with the BMP's in place and efforts on the part of beekeepers to avoid exposure, bee mortality associated with plantings of corn, canola and soybeans has continued. And despite attempts to control dust from planting, pesticide residues are being found in adjacent fields and in soil and water.

Like the European Union, who has suspended the use of these pesticides, we didn't just use our personal experience in coming to our position. We turned to science for answers. And what we found is very troubling. Independent study after study confirms that these pesticides live on in the soil for years, contaminate our water, drift to wild habitats and kill not only honey bees, but the other pollinators we rely on for our fruit and vegetable crops. Bees aren't just dying immediately upon exposure, scientists are confirming the longer-term, sub-lethal effects of pesticide exposure as well.

There is no doubt that these pesticides are killing bees. PMRA confirmed that the extensive bee kills in 2012 were associated with the planting of corn in at least 70% of the cases reported. Preliminary reports indicate that 2013 is at least as bad as 2012, especially when winter losses are factored in.

Every week I hear from beekeepers, some second and third generation like myself, who tell me they cannot continue to sustain these losses. We are all concerned about where our industry is headed. We realize that other issues such as pests and diseases, habitat loss and nutrition are all factors in bee health, but these we can, and do, manage.

We have heard from many farmers who support the suspension and who believe there are alternative products and practices. We urge you to learn more and reach an informed position. We hope you will agree that preserving our beekeeping industry and saving our pollinators is of vital concern to all farmers.

So much depends on it.

Yours,

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