



CLARIFYING THE OBA POSITION ON NEONICOTINOIDS

The OBA has not changed its position on neonicotinoids used on field crops in Ontario. Nor has it backed off from a ban. The OBA (and the NFU) calls for an immediate moratorium on the sale of neonicotinoid treated seeds.

The OBA's foremost goal has always been – and continues to be – to protect bees and other pollinators and maintain a viable beekeeping industry.

As members of the agricultural community, we recognize that the limited use of pesticides when used with Integrated Pest Management and in a targeted manner, may be necessary in some situations where a crop is threatened. To this end, we would allow farmers to apply for a one-year permit for neonicotinoid application to untreated seed if they can demonstrate pest pressure commensurate with the use of neonicotinoids. We believe this is a reasonable course of action that could reduce the use of neonicotinoids by 80% – 90%, if not more.

Beekeepers have been accused of making an unreasonable demand to ban the use of neonicotinoid pesticides on field crops at the expense of crop production, but a review of the facts shows clearly that this accusation is both unfair and inaccurate.

PESTICIDES ARE OVERUSED:

Ontario is applying neonicotinoids to 99% of corn and 65% of soy when Ontario's crop specialists tell us we only need it on a fraction of these acres: "Not every acre in the province needs protection from wireworm and grubs. Only 10 to 20% of the acres are at risk from these two pests, particularly those fields with sandy or silty soils."

OVERUSE LEAVES NO ROOM FOR BEES:

At this rate over 4.2 million acres of neonic treated corn, soy, winter wheat and canola were planted last year. That's enough neonicotinoids to cover most of southern Ontario where the majority of beekeepers keep their bees. And the recent increase in corn and soy acreage is destroying habitat for wild bees and bumblebees.

TREATED SEEDS ARE A DISINCENTIVE FOR IPM

IPM preaches practices like crop rotation and cover crops and the use pesticides only when there are pests threatening crops. There is little sense in applying pesticides as a preventative when there is no proof that they are needed. But when seeds come already treated farmers have little motivation to consider IPM.

LACK OF PRICE SIGNALS = CHEAP INSURANCE

High producing hybrid seeds have been offered already coated with neonicotinoid pesticides. There is no price attached to the application of neonicotinoid coating. Farmers perceive they are getting crop insurance for free. Unfortunately, bees pay the price.

BAYER AND SYNGENTA SHAREHOLDERS PROFIT AT THE EXPENSE OF BEES

Nowhere has Bayer or Syngenta considered using less pesticides. Promoting the use of neonicotinoid pesticide without regard for whether it is needed or not has allowed Bayer and Syngenta to create a \$2.6 billion global business.

THERE CAN BE NO DELAYS IN TAKING ACTION

If action is not taken now we will be facing another planting season with the threat of more bee kills. Seed companies need to switch over to a system where untreated seed is the default and farmers get their seed treated only if, and when, they need protection. This is a big infrastructure and cultural shift for the seed companies.

THIS CYCLE WILL CONTINUE UNLESS IT IS BROKEN.

Both the OBA and the NFU have concluded that the only way to break this cycle of indiscriminate overuse is to demand an immediate moratorium on the sale of neonicotinoid-treated seed.

SOME FACTS:

1. *Neonicotinoids kill bees.* The amount of neonicotinoids applied to one kernel of corn is enough to kill five hives of bees.
2. *Neonicotinoids are responsible for bee kills in Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba.* PMRA has confirmed this fact. In September 2013, PMRA concluded that "current agricultural practices related to the use of neonicotinoid treated corn and soybean seed are not sustainable."
3. *Neonicotinoids are being used at an alarming rate.* Over 50% of Ontario's cropland is being seeded with neonicotinoid treated seed.
4. *Neonicotinoids don't guarantee yield.* The Center for Food Safety recently released a literature review that concluded, "In many cases, the compounds are not providing a yield or economic benefit to farmers." Purdue University professor of Field Crop Entomology Christian Krupke's studies have not been able to show any increase in corn yields with treated seeds compared to untreated.
5. *They generally aren't needed.* With the latest hybrids, only wireworm and white grub are controlled by neonicotinoids and, at best, only a fraction of Ontario cropland actually needs to use them.
6. *IPM is the best farming practice.* Contrary to the statement by CropLife Canada president Pierre Patelle, who stated, "The science of soil insects just isn't there," OMAF crop specialists believe that we can adopt IPM and monitor pest pressure, "Farmers need to determine if soil pests are present at threshold levels. Even if they were in the past, it doesn't mean they are now, especially if insecticide seed treatments have been used in the same field over multiple years. If the soil pests are not at threshold and impacting yield, a seed insecticide is not necessary."

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND REFERENCES: ONTARIOBEE.COM/NEONICS