

Report Shows Honeybee Decline Is Global



(*Beyond Pesticides*, March 14, 2011) Scientists working for the United Nations (UN) reveal in a report published March 10, 2011 that the collapse of honeybee colonies is now a global phenomenon that could have devastating consequences. Declines in managed bee colonies, seen increasingly in Europe and the US in the past decade, are now being observed in China, Japan and Egypt according to the report, “**Global Bee Colony Disorders and other Threats to Insect Pollinators**,” from the **United Nations Environment Programme** (UNEP).

In the UNEP report, leading honeybee experts in the world stress that the potentially disastrous decline in bees—which are a vital pollinating element in food production for the growing global population—is likely to continue unless humans profoundly change their ways from the use of insecticides to air pollution.

“The way humanity manages or mismanages its nature-based assets, including pollinators, will in part define our collective future in the 21st century,” UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner said. “The fact is that of the 100 crop species that provide 90 per cent of the world’s food, over 70 are pollinated by bees.”

“Human beings have fabricated the illusion that in the 21st century they have the technological prowess to be independent of nature. Bees underline the reality that we are more, not less, dependent on nature’s services in a world of close to 7 billion people,” Mr. Steiner said, calling on the world to factor in the often invisible multi-trillion dollar services provided by nature.



The increasing use of chemicals in agriculture has been **found** to damage bees by weakening their immune systems. Laboratory studies show that some insecticides and fungicides can act together to be 1,000 times more toxic to bees. They can also affect the sense of direction, memory and brain metabolism, and herbicides and pesticides may reduce the availability of plants bees need for food and for the larval stages of some pollinators. To learn more [click here](#).

Declines in managed bee colonies date back to the mid-1960s in Europe. However, since 1998 these declines have accelerated, especially in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom.

In North America, losses of honeybee colonies since 2004 have left the continent with fewer managed pollinators than at any time in the past 50 years, while Chinese beekeepers have recently faced several inexplicable and complex symptoms of colony losses and a quarter of beekeepers in Japan have recently been confronted with sudden losses of their colonies.

In Africa, Egyptian beekeepers along the Nile River have reported signs of colony collapse disorder (CCD) although there are no other confirmed reports from the rest of the continent so far.

The crisis of CCD in the honeybee population is an increasingly widespread phenomenon of bees disappearing or abandoning their hives. While research is underway to determine the cause of CCD, **pesticides** such as **neonicotinoids** and **fipronil** have emerged as one of the prime suspects.

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