



## Press Release

25th September 2012

**Brussels**

### **Food Authority EFSA's bias on bee decline and pesticides**

**EFSA has asked Helen Thompson from the British Food Agency to write a report on interactions between pesticides and other factors in effects on bees. Helen Thompson is well known to have been working closely with the pesticides industry and to systematically deny relevant studies pointing at pesticides to explain honeybees disappearance. The outcome of the report commissioned to Thompson cannot be a surprise for EFSA and it wasn't: Thompson concluded that there is no field-study that can demonstrate that neonicotinoid insecticides are responsible for honeybee colony deaths and points at other factors than pesticides for the bee decline. PAN-Europe blames EFSA for attributing the contract to a person whose conflicts of interest are unacceptable and whose famous biased opinion is more than suspicious. PAN-Europe has sent an access-to-documents request to EFSA to find out who is behind this. The move of EFSA is in big contrast to the opinion of the EFSA panel on pesticides in May 2012 saying that – looking at the science published - their review reports evidence for sub-lethal effects of pesticides on all major species of bees. Food Authority EFSA shows again not to be independent but rather to act like an interest group. EFSA uses similar tactics as industry does by casting doubts on the work of independent academic scientists.**

Helen Thompson is well known for her conflicts of interest with the industry and her denial of the role of pesticides in honeybee deaths. She is the chairwoman of the International Committee on Plant – Bee relationship (ICPBR), a nebulous working group, sponsored by the industry (Bayer, BASF, DOW, DuPont and Syngenta) [1], mainly composed of industry people, who have been writing the risk assessment procedures for the toxicity of pesticides on bees. ICPBR proposed, for instance, that a 30% decline in the bee brood and a 50% loss of eggs and larvae is acceptable during toxicity assessment on bees [2]. Pure aberrance for honeybee specialists!

Furthermore, Thompson published an article [3] with Christian Maus (Bayer) in which she states that pesticides' sublethal toxicity (learning, orientation, etc.) should not be a mandatory testing requirement and that field testing is more relevant. EFSA's own May 2012 pesticides risk assessment evaluation [4] stated that the sublethal effect evaluation is very important and should be made mandatory whereas important criticisms were made on field testing. In the 90's, H. Thompson has also been leading studies for Bayer to evaluate toxicity of their product on bees in the frame of their authorization procedures.

In April 2011, Helen Thompson declared on Channel 4 News that "There's been a lot of studies undertaken, across Europe and here in the UK and there's been no strong evidence they are linked to bee losses at all" [5]. In her report for EFSA, H. Thompson confirms her biased opinion, as from the introduction of the report, only poor diet due to landscape modifications and pests and pathogens are raised as possible causes to the disappearance of honeybees.

Knowing all this, EFSA's choice in awarding H. Thompson the mission to write such an important report in the understanding of honeybee disappearance is totally inadmissible. We also feel this decision is against EFSA's own rules excluding people having a conflict of interest. Helen Thompson in her entire work seems to serve the interests of industry and is not capable of writing an independent report. PAN-Europe therefore urges EFSA to make a new call for tender and to ask a real independent laboratory to make a new evaluation.

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### **Further information**

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NOTES:

[1] [http://www.jki.bund.de/fileadmin/dam\\_uploads/\\_veroeff/JKI\\_Archiv/JKI\\_Archiv\\_423.pdf](http://www.jki.bund.de/fileadmin/dam_uploads/_veroeff/JKI_Archiv/JKI_Archiv_423.pdf)

[2] Becker, Vergnet, Maus, Pistorius, Tornier, Wilkins (2009). Presentation of the proposal of the ICPBR Bee brood working group for testing and assessing potential side effects from the use of plant protection products on honeybee brood. 10th international symposium, Bucharest, October 8-10, 2008.

[3] <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ps.1458/abstract>

[4] <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/doc/2668.pdf>

[5] <http://www.channel4.com/news/bee-decline-not-caused-by-pesticides>