



COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION

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## Council conclusions on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on Honeybee Health

*3087th AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES Council meeting  
Brussels, 17 May 2011*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION:

1. Warmly **welcomes** the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on Honeybee Health (hereinafter referred to as "the Communication") which responds to concerns expressed by Member States and the European Parliament in its resolutions on the subject. The Council appreciates the work done by the Commission in preparing the Communication, considering that the beekeeping sector plays an important economic role and also a crucial role in increasing biological diversity, in particular as regards its essential contribution through pollination. The actions already taken by the Commission, such as the increased EU contribution for the period 2011-2013 for national apiculture programmes, are also welcomed.
2. **Acknowledges** that the Communication addresses bee health in a comprehensive way and offers an adequate insight into how the various elements involved in bee health are organised and interact.

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3. **Stresses** that, since the different surveillance systems and the lack of representative and comparable data make it difficult to obtain appropriate scientific knowledge about bee health, there is a need to study and to determine the extent and the possible causes of colony losses in order to plan future action on a solid and objective scientific basis. Until more accurate knowledge is acquired, every reasonable step should be taken to promote honeybee health and to mitigate the risks caused by different factors, including developing joint initiatives at the level of the European Union.
4. **Emphasises** the importance of devoting attention to honeybee health, as these sensitive animals are early indicators of the adverse effects of the loss of biodiversity and pollution. In this context, it recalls the general principle of the EU's overall Animal Health Strategy 2007-2013, namely that "prevention is better than cure".
5. **Emphasises that:**
  - a holistic and coordinated approach to bee health is needed. While the actions proposed by the Communication are beneficial or have the potential to be, thorough follow-up and delivery in the next few years will be crucial;
  - continuation of research and agri-financial actions should be considered for the post-2013 period;
  - there is a need to support breeding programmes which concentrate on disease and pest tolerance (especially against varroosis);
  - promoting proper land management (in particular agricultural practices promoting flower and pollen rich grass meadows and field margins) and other agri-environmental objectives is crucial to increasing biological diversity (as proposed in the 2020 biodiversity targets), including agricultural and forest biodiversity, as well as to conserving natural habitats for honey bees, wild bees and bumble bees given their important roles in pollination;
  - the Regulation (CE) N°1107/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market and the Directive 2009/128/CE of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework for Community action to achieve the sustainable use of pesticides will establish once entered into force a new framework for the authorisation and for the use of plant protection products in the EU.
6. **Underlines that:**
  - beekeepers themselves are primarily responsible for the health of their bees, especially through the implementation of good beekeeping practices and compliance with the applicable rules, and it is therefore essential to provide quality training programmes for beekeepers in all Member States and to increase their commitment to participate. National bee-health experts could support these training programmes;
  - it is important to encourage the stakeholders to develop guides on good beekeeping practices as well as to consult beekeepers' organisations during the development of apiculture programmes and of related legislation;

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- supporting action by national bee-health experts could help to raise local beekeepers' awareness of their responsibilities and of honeybee diseases and provide assistance to veterinary authorities;
- training officials from the competent authorities is essential to prevent the introduction of exotic threats to bees. In addition, it is important for Member States to monitor for exotic pests to facilitate their early detection or interception;
- where plant protection products are used that may potentially be harmful to bees, close cooperation between local beekeepers and farmers would be beneficial.

**7. Invites the Commission:**

- to make the outcome of the pilot surveillance programme, coordinated by the newly designated European Union Reference Laboratory for bee health, available to all parties concerned;
  - to continue providing training for the authorities responsible for bee health;
  - to develop, where necessary, non-regulatory instruments such as EU guidelines on general principles for controlling certain diseases and for treatment practices for bees (in particular against varroosis);
  - to examine the possibility of providing further incentives to the pharmaceutical sector in order to increase choice and to increase the availability of authorised veterinary medicinal products for bees;
  - to consider bees and other minor species when studying and proposing, if justified, simplified authorisation requirements for veterinary medicinal products;
  - to evaluate the need for additional rules on controls of residues in honey for various pesticides and veterinary medicinal products and to propose the measures that are deemed necessary;
  - to continue to update the plant protection product risk assessment scheme for bees, and to look for possible gaps in the methodology of the risk assessment and eliminate them where they exist and if considered scientifically significant or relevant for bee health;
  - to evaluate the need for financial support and funding of in-depth research on bee health and on the causes of increased losses of bees, including the development of alternative methods to control major bee diseases and pests (especially varroosis);
  - to consider financial support for national apiculture programmes for the post-2013 period;
  - to take account of serious honeybee pests and diseases when reviewing Council Decision 2009/470/EC of 25 May 2009 on expenditure in the veterinary field with a view to possibly covering the financing of national programmes for the eradication, control and monitoring of such diseases."
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