



BEE INFORMED PARTNERSHIP: TIER 6 – 2014 BEE BROKER SURVEY  
SUMMARY  
**PRELIMINARY RESULTS – NOT FOR GENERAL DISTRIBUTION**

Kathy Baylis<sup>1</sup>, Jai Holt<sup>1</sup>, Grace Kunkel<sup>2</sup>, Meghan McConnell<sup>2</sup>, Karen Rennich<sup>2</sup>, Dennis vanEngelsdorp<sup>2</sup>, for the The Bee Informed Partnership<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Illinois, <sup>2</sup>University of Maryland, <sup>3</sup>[www.beeinformed.org](http://www.beeinformed.org)

In March and April of 2014, 17 brokers responded to the Pollinator Availability survey. This response represents about half of the estimated 30 brokers in the industry. These brokers collectively placed 352,972 colonies in almonds in 2014 and the number of colonies collectively placed by the responding brokers represents 20.7% of the 1.7 million colonies used for almond pollination this year<sup>1</sup>. Of the colonies placed, about 18.5% were managed in California exclusively. The average broker placed 20,763 colonies, owned by 13 different beekeepers, and placed these bees in orchards owned by 23 different almond growers.

The simple average<sup>2</sup> rental price of these placed colonies was \$175.47. The lowest rental price for a colony was \$145 and the highest price was \$201. When the size of the brokers' operations are taken into account, the estimated average price is \$181.90<sup>3</sup>. This suggests that, on average, brokers who placed more colonies charged a higher price for colonies. About 30% of the brokers surveyed rewarded beekeepers for providing high grade colonies. Of the brokers who did not include grade

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<sup>1</sup> Based on an average stocking rate of 2 colonies per bearing acre and 860,000 bearing acres  
[http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics\\_by\\_State/California/Publications/Fruits\\_and\\_Nuts/201405almac.pdf](http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/California/Publications/Fruits_and_Nuts/201405almac.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>The simple average was calculated by averaging the responses across brokers. In other words, the average price responses from each broker were added together and the sum was divided by the number of respondents.

<sup>3</sup> Operation size is taken into account by calculating a weighted average. Each response is weighted by the number of colonies the broker placed.



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premiums in their contracts, several stated that it is too much extra work to provide grade premiums for high grade colonies.

The simple average grade of the colonies placed was 9.41 frames. When operation size was accounted for<sup>4</sup>, the average grade of a placed colony was 10.52 frames. Of the 17 brokers surveyed, 14 brokers responded that they had all of their colonies graded. Brokers often elected to grade their colonies themselves rather than hire an agency to do it for them. The average number of colonies placed per acre was about 2, with brokers placing as few as 0.5 colonies per acre and as many as 3.5 per acer.

The brokers surveyed placed colonies for a total of 218 beekeepers. Only 32 of those beekeepers were short (14.8%) colonies, that is, they did not have enough colonies to meet their obligations. Those beekeepers were short a total of 16,448 colonies representing 4.7% of the colonies placed. The brokers estimated that they could have placed about 49,400 more colonies if demanded (14.1% of total colonies placed). Only 29.4% of brokers said they could have placed colonies for an additional 100 acre farm. The brokers surveyed collectively placed colonies for a total of 392 almond growers.

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<sup>4</sup> Operation size is taken into account by calculating a weighted average. Each response is weighted by the number of colonies the broker placed.