



# BEYOND PESTICIDES

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## **Presidential Memorandum Acknowledges Pollinator Declines and Mandates Federal Action**

### **EPA Fails to Restrict Pesticides Linked to Bee Decline**

(Washington DC, June 20, 2014) The White House today issued a Presidential Memorandum on pollinator health to the heads of federal agencies requiring action to “reverse pollinator losses and help restore populations to healthy levels.” The President is directing agencies to establish a Pollinator Health Task Force, and to develop a National Pollinator Health Strategy, including a Pollinator Research Action Plan. Beyond Pesticides applauds this announcement and action that recognizes and elevates the plight of pollinators in the U.S.

Today, the last day of National Pollinator Week, President Barack Obama signed a Presidential Memorandum that recognizes the severe losses in the populations of the nation’s pollinators, including honey bees, wild bees, Monarch butterflies, and others. In accordance with these losses and acknowledging the importance pollinators have to the agricultural economy, the Memorandum directs federal agencies to establish a Pollinator Health Task Force, to be chaired by USDA, develop a pollinator health strategy within 180 days, and support and create pollinator habitat. This federal strategy will include a pollinator research action plan, with a focus on preventing and recovering from pollinator losses, including studying how various stressors, like pesticides, pathogens, and management practices contribute to pollinator losses. The task force will also engage in a public education initiative and develop public-private partnerships with various stakeholders.

“Today, President Obama set a precedent, elevating the plight of our nation’s pollinators by acknowledging not only their importance to our economy, but directing federal agencies to be leaders in finding meaningful solutions to our current pollinator crisis,” said Jay Feldman, executive director, Beyond Pesticides. Federal agencies like EPA and USDA have been slow to respond to pollinator losses and must take immediate action, especially on pesticides known to be toxic to bees and other pollinators.

While the President highlights many factors that contribute to pollinator decline, it is the neonicotinoid class of pesticides that have been receiving the most scrutiny from beekeepers and scientists. These pesticides are not only highly toxic to bees, but studies find that even at low levels neonicotinoids impair foraging ability, navigation, learning behaviour, and suppress the immune system, making bees more susceptible to pathogens and disease. According to advocates, bee deaths in Oregon this week from the use of a neonicotinoid and mounting scientific evidence require an urgent response that necessitates removing these chemicals from the market. With continued incidents like these, beekeepers and many other concerned groups and citizens continue to urge EPA to suspend the use of neonicotinoids.

Last year, Beyond Pesticides, Center for Food Safety, and others filed a lawsuit against EPA on its continued registration of these chemicals, and its lack of meaningful action to protect pollinators. With one in three bites of food reliant on pollinators, it is imperative that solutions be found quickly to protect bees and other pollinators.

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