

## **Pollinator Protection Activities Update**

May 8-9, 2019 Pesticide Program Dialogue Committee Meeting

### Background:

- Pollinator protection is a priority for the EPA. Pollinator species are important to our ecological systems and successful food production.
- EPA conducts pollinator risk assessments to support regulatory decisions for new and existing pesticides using the best available science. To ensure that it has the best available science for these assessments, the Agency has developed guidance to help identify additional data that may be appropriate or needed and to outline review methods for assessing impacts to beneficial insects (i.e. honeybees).
- Managed honeybees and wild bee population trends are concerning. For example, national colony numbers are in decline. Also, over-wintering colony losses in managed bee populations are significant.
- The current understanding of these difficult trends is that a complex set of stressors have contributed to honey bee declines, including loss of habitat, parasites and disease, genetics, poor nutrition, bee management practices, and pesticide exposure. No single factor has been identified as the main cause, instead each of these are thought to be contributing to the issues.
- In response and with the goal of supporting pollinators broadly, EPA's pesticide office is addressing this issue on two fronts: (1) improving the science for honey bee risk assessment and (2) advancing management initiatives to achieve pollinator protection and sustainability.

### Managed Pollinator Protection Plans (MP3s):

- EPA is working with the states and tribes on managed pollinator protection plans which are intended to increase communication between stakeholders to reduce exposure of honey bee colonies to pesticides. These are not regulatory programs but instead help address this issue at the local level so that different communities and groups may work together and coordinate efforts. For example, MP3s can be a mechanism for growers and pesticide users to work with and trouble shoot issues with beekeepers.
- Plans can also include elements designed to reduce chemical exposure and enhance habitat for non-Apis bees and other pollinators.
- Nearly every state in the country has or is in the process of developing an MP3.
- Tribal Nations working with the Tribal Pesticide Program Council (TPPC) are also developing Pollinator Protection Plans (P3s) with a focus on native pollinators. At least 10 tribes have or will be developing plans.
- In 2016, the Pesticide Program Dialogue Committee (PPDC) convened a "pollinator protection plan metrics workgroup" charged with providing recommendations to EPA to

use in evaluating the effectiveness of MP3s at a national level. In 2017 the PPDC accepted the workgroup's proposal for a survey to be developed and administered by the state lead agencies. Preliminary results from AAPCO/SFIREG MP3 Survey are expected in the spring of 2020. The survey is planned to be conducted annually.

Policy to Mitigate Acute Contact Risk to Bees from Pesticides (“Acute Policy”):

- Developed to restrict the use of products toxic to bees in crops that contract for commercial pollination services.
- Applies to products with outdoor foliar uses; are registered for crops that may use pollination services; and have application rates that result in risk estimates which exceed the EPA Tier I acute risk Level of Concern (LOC) for bees. The Policy allows for flexibility and may be superseded by chemical-specific data.
- Approach open to further refinement due to night-time spray applications for products with a Residual Toxicity time (RT25) of 6 hours or less; night-time applications to crops that have an indeterminate blooming period; and, applications to indeterminate blooming crops when temperatures are 50° or less.
- Considered to be an interim risk management approach while refined pollinator information and assessments are developed on a chemical-by-chemical basis. Implementation may be on a case-by-case basis in registration or registration review decisions.

Key Goals and Next Steps Concerning Pollinators:

- Under Registration Review, complete the pollinator risk assessments and Proposed Interim Decisions (PID) for neonicotinoid insecticides.
- Continue to develop and support states and tribes in their stewardship efforts for Pollinator Protection Plans and Managed Pollinator Protection Plans. Early results of the AAPCO/SFIREG Survey may be available in 2020.
- Work toward advancing the critical policy goals of the 2015 National Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators. Some of the important goals include integrating appropriate habitat and green infrastructure into EPA's remediation efforts under the Superfund program and accelerating EPA's review for any new pest management methods and products which will be useful for helping beekeepers address hive pests.