

**PPDC Pollinator Protection Update
October 28-29, 2020 Pesticide Program Dialogue Committee Meeting**

Summary:

Pollinator protection is a priority for EPA. The EPA has taken an active role in multiple efforts to promote and increase pollinator protection through regulatory actions, encouraging voluntary changes to pesticide use by registrants, and providing input on research programs aimed at better understanding the factors associated with declining pollinator health. Beyond regulatory efforts, proposed mitigation efforts for pesticides include promoting voluntary stewardship efforts to encourage best practices, education, and outreach to applicators and beekeepers.

Background:

- While the number of managed honey bee colonies has been increasing in the U.S. since the mid-1900s, based on the Bee Informed Partnership (BIP) 2019–2020 Loss and Management survey. These survey data also indicate that U.S. beekeepers lost an estimated 43.7% of their colonies between April 2019 to April 2020. This value is higher than the 10-yr average annual loss of 39%. Despite these losses, beekeepers have managed to sustain and actually increase the total number of managed honey bee colonies, which based on USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) survey data is 2.8 million colonies.
- The current understanding is that multiple interacting stressors are contributing to declines in honey bee health, including loss of habitat, parasites and disease, genetics, poor nutrition, bee management practices, and pesticide exposure. Although no single factor has been identified as the main cause, varroa mites and the viruses they vector are considered to be major factors in the declines in bee health.

EPA Activities:

- With the goal of supporting pollinators broadly, the EPA is continuing to address these issues on several fronts including improving the science for assessing risk of pesticides to honey bees and advancing management initiatives to mitigate potential exposure of bees to pesticides.
- EPA is working with the international research community and with representatives from government, industry and academia to advance methods for assessing pollinator exposure to and effects from pesticides.
- EPA is leveraging existing data to determine whether more targeted testing can enhance the predictiveness and efficiency of testing programs and conducting retrospective analyses of pollinator-related exposure and effect data to enhance predictive models and reduce the need for resource intensive field studies.
- In addition, EPA is working with the states and tribes on managed pollinator protection plans that are intended to increase communication and cooperation between stakeholders to reduce exposure of bees to pesticides.
- In December 2019, the American Association of Pesticide Control Officers (AAPCO) released its initial survey of state lead agencies and tribes evaluating different elements of pollinator protection plans with respect to reducing exposure of bees to pesticides as recommended in 2017 by the pollinator protection plan metrics workgroup of the Pesticide Program Dialogue Committee (PPDC). In February 2020, the Office of Pesticides Programs presented to the AAPCO national meeting the agency's strategy to utilize AAPCO survey data as a line of evidence for evaluating the efficacy of

managed pollinator protection plans (MP3) at a national level; the survey will be administered by AAPCO biannually and the initial year (*i.e.*, 2019 survey data) will serve as a baseline from which to evaluate change. Other lines of evidence include survey data from the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), the Bee Informed Partnership (BIP), and bee kill incident data reported to EPA. EPA is revising its Cooperative Agreement Guidance with states/tribes to reflect additional opportunities for lead agencies to utilize Cooperative grant monies on pollinator protection activities/needs identified through the AAPCO survey. EPA is also updating the National Program Manager Guidance to reflect ways in which EPA Regional offices and Headquarters can serve as resources to states in tribes in protecting pollinators.

- In January 2020, EPA published the Proposed Interim Decisions for the neonicotinoid insecticides acetamiprid, clothianidin, dinotefuran, imidacloprid and thiamethoxam, and reopened the public comment period from May 21 – June 20, 2020. These registration decisions are supported by one of the largest pollinator datasets ever submitted in EPA history.
- Throughout 2020, EPA has been actively increasing awareness, through a 3-pronged approach consisting of a workshop/conference co-hosted with USDA, a series of public webinars, and the renewal of relevant MOUs. Beginning in March 2020, EPA hosted a pollinator webinar series which included: 1) improving habitat - Creating Monarch Habitats in Schools and Communities (March); 2) Advancing the Science of Assessing Risks to Bees from Pesticides (July); 3) Stewardship and Best Management Practices (August); and, 4) Engaging Stakeholders (September). In June 2020, Administrator Wheeler signed a proclamation declaring the first ever EPA Pollinator Protection Week and renewed a 2017 Memorandum of Understanding with the Pollinator Partnership to further the Agency's work and outline actions to conserve and protect pollinators. In September 2020, EPA co-hosted with USDA the Pollinator State-of-the-Science Workshop to discuss the current science related to pollinators and identify ways to improve pollinator health through collaborative efforts across government, industry, growers, academia and various other stakeholders. This effort will culminate in a report that identifies future USDA pollinator research that will inform regulatory decision making.
- Through the pesticide registration review program, EPA continues to reduce potential risks to bees and other pollinators. EPA will also continue follow-up work with USDA from the Workshop described above and along with other federal agencies will identify future bee-related research that can potentially inform regulatory decision making. The USDA report is anticipated by the end of 2020.