

Death of the Bees, US Government Approves Another Toxic Insecticide

By [Global Research News](#)

Global Research, April 15, 2014

[Beyond Pesticides](#) 7 February 2014

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Environment](#), [Science and Medicine](#)

“Beekeepers nationwide have experienced honey bee losses of over 40 percent over the 2012/2013 winter period —2013/2014 winter losses are likely to be released soon— with some beekeepers reporting losses of over 70 percent, far exceeding the normal rate of 10 to 15 percent. Some have even been driven out of business. Current estimates of the number of surviving hives in the U.S. show that these colonies may not be able to meet the future pollination demands of agricultural crops.”

Flying in the face of [recent science](#) demonstrating that pollinator populations are declining, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has made the decision to unconditionally register another pesticide that is known to be highly toxic to bees, coming almost one year after EPA registered [sulfoxaflor](#), disregarding concerns from beekeepers and environmental groups. The announcement, posted in the [Federal Register](#) on Wednesday, set tolerances for the pesticide cyantraniliprole in foods ranging from almonds and berries, to leafy vegetables, onions, and milk. EPA establishes the allowable limit of the chemical residue, called tolerances, based on what EPA considers ‘acceptable’ risk. EPA’s ruling details that “there is a reasonable certainty that no harm will result from aggregate exposure to the pesticide residue,” despite all evidence that cyantraniliprole is toxic to bees and harmful to mammals.

Ignoring beekeeper warning and concerns on their impacts to bees, EPA has given the green light for cyantraniliprole after recently registering sulfoxaflor. In July 2013, [beekeepers filed suit](#) against EPA for their decision to register sulfoxaflor when it failed to demonstrate that it will not cause any ‘unreasonable adverse effects on the environment’ as required by the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). Several comments were submitted by concerned beekeepers and environmental advocacy groups, like Beyond Pesticides, during the public comment period that stated that approval of a cyantraniliprole, pesticide highly toxic to bees would only exacerbate the problems faced by an already tenuous honey bee industry and further decimate bee populations. However, instead of denying or suspending registration in the face of dire pollinator losses, EPA has chosen to register another insecticide that is toxic to bees, dismissing concerns regarding bee health in its response, and setting itself up for further litigation.

[EPA’s response to Beyond Pesticides and other commenters can be found here.](#)

Cyantraniliprole is a systemic insecticide that works by impairing the regulation of muscle contractions causing paralysis and eventual death in insects. Beyond its impact to target pests —which include sucking and chewing insects such as whiteflies and thrips— EPA’s most disturbing conclusions relate to the impact of cyantraniliprole on the livers of

mammals: “With repeated dosing, consistent findings of mild to moderate increases in liver weights across multiple species (rats, mice, and dogs) are observed. Dogs appear to be more sensitive than rats and mice...show[ing] progressive severity with increased duration of exposure.”

EPA notes that cyantraniliprole also alters the stability of the thyroid as tested on laboratory rats as a result of enhanced metabolism of the thyroid hormones by the liver. Although the agency states that “cyantraniliprole is not a direct thyroid toxicant,” any indirect effects on thyroid function are likely to disrupt the endocrine system. Given that its current endocrine disruptor screening program (EDSP) is currently still in the process of validating tests, EPA’s registration of a new active ingredient that shows a propensity for endocrine disruption is cause for alarm.

In addition to these findings, EPA has registered cyantraniliprole as a seed treatment although it is considered “highly toxic on acute and oral contact basis” for bees. EPA is aware that pesticide-treated seeds directly threaten foraging bees and other non-target organisms, which are exposed to contaminated dust plumes during planting. Studies have documented high bee mortality following seed sowing and exposure to contaminated dust from agricultural fields. Moreover, EPA acknowledges the need to reduce fugitive toxic dust. However, with emerging science increasingly attributing pesticide exposures as one of the major causes of pollinator declines and the [recent precautionary measures](#) taken in the European Union to ban the use of pesticides known to impact bees, EPA’s registration of cyantraniliprole raises serious concerns.

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EPA’s approach to registration reinforces the urgent need for a national transition to organic. The takeaway for organic, as it grows beyond its current \$35 billion market share, is the need for rigorous science-based decision making that requires precaution on the allowance of chemical products in the face of hazards and scientific uncertainty. We must keep in mind the underlying standards of the organic rule, which requires that practices “maintain or improve soil organic matter content in a manner that does not contribute to contamination of crops, soil, or water by plant nutrients, pathogenic organisms, heavy metals, or residues of prohibited substances.”

For the most recent action being taken to protect honey bees, see the Beyond Pesticides [BEE Protective](#) campaign which works with national and local groups to protect honey bees and other pollinators from pesticides and contaminated landscapes.

Join us April 11-12 for Beyond Pesticides’ [32nd National Pesticide Forum](#), in Portland, OR on “Advancing Sustainable Communities: People, pollinators, and practices” which will focus on solutions to the decline of pollinators and other beneficials; strengthening organic agriculture; improving farmworker protection and agricultural justice; and creating healthy buildings, schools and homes. Space is limited so [register now](#).

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