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Business and nature working together: action by the apiculture sector to protect wild pollinators

What about pollinators?

Pollinators – such as bees, hoverflies, moths, butterflies and beetles – are declining dramatically around the world, and Europe is no exception. With pollinator populations being essential in underpinning the stability of pollinator services over time, this decline of pollinators puts managed and natural ecosystems functioning at risk.

Why should you care?

Threats to wild pollinators are a source of a wide concern, given their role in the preservation of the environment and the production of food. Actions to mitigate the main pressures on wild pollinators will also directly benefit honey bees, such as restoring and creating more flower-rich habitats and reducing pesticide use. Wild bees and other pollinators



are considered more sensitive than honey bees to various human-induced pressures. They can act as sentinels and warn beekeepers about negative changes in the environment that will affect honey bee colonies. The environment in which wild pollinators thrive, will also provide an excellent home to honey bees and ensure high-quality bee products.

By protecting wider biodiversity and taking care of wild pollinators, beekeepers protect their own business. The apiculture sector has a positive reputation as it is seen to have a beneficial relationship with the environment and the protection of biodiversity more generally. Public interest in pollinators has increased greatly in recent years with many pollinator conservation initiatives now taking place across Europe. For many citizens, honey bees are the first contact with pollinators and pollination, which provides the sector with the unique opportunity to educate citizens about the importance of pollinators and biodiversity. Supporting actions such as restoration of pollinator habitats and reduction of environmental pollution, in particular pesticides, will provide environmental and social benefits and assist the business in building/maintaining a good rapport with the public.

Beekeepers across the EU have been taking efforts for the conservation of biodiversity, and therefore are an important partner in the EU efforts to conserve wild pollinators. Only by protecting wider biodiversity and ensuring that ecosystems in the EU are in good condition, we will secure a good environment for wild and managed pollinators.



What can you do?

- Become an ambassadors for wild pollinators and biodiversity;
- educate the general public about the life of bees and other pollinators, and pollination. Give advice on how to manage private gardens in a pollinator-friendly way. This can be done through nature tours, lectures and trainings on the conservation of wild pollinators, activities for children, citizen science projects, planting projects etc.;
- spread environmental knowledge, help hobbyists with best practices and support (novice) beekeepers who have concrete questions about natural beekeeping;
- ensure pollinator-friendly management of the premises where the bee hives are located, or – when you do not own or maintain these areas – promote such management with responsible land managers;
- avoid competition between honey bees and wild pollinators, by using a precautionary approach when selecting the apiary site;
- avoid the use of (invasive) alien species;
- help to reduce environmental pollution (i.e. pesticides, heavy metals, artificial light);
- support research, including citizen science programmes;
- collaborate with NGOs, land owners and managers in taking conservation actions and/or monitoring efforts.

