Death of the Bees, Pollinating the World's Food Crops: Spotlight on Bayer-Monsanto Neonicotinoid Insecticides

By Chemical Concern
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Farming Today (23.9.16) seems to be unaware of the content of the neonicotinoids research studies obtained by Greenpeace after a freedom of information request to the US Environmental Protection Agency. Bayer intends to make these public at the International Congress of Entomology next week.

This is not good news for Bayer, debt-laden since its takeover of Monsanto and reported to have seen its shares 'drifting downwards'.

Reports in the Guardian and EurActiv inform readers that the research studies, conducted by Syngenta and Bayer on their neonicotinoid insecticides, showed that Syngenta's thiamethoxam and Bayer's clothianidin seriously harmed colonies at high doses, but found no significant effects below concentrations of 50 parts per billion (ppb) and 40ppb respectively.

Bees and other insects vital for pollinating three-quarters of the world's food crops, have been in significant decline, due – it is thought -to the loss of flower-rich habitats, disease and the use of pesticides.

Consider the cumulative effect of neonic residues ingested from planting dust, water and treated seeds

However researchers note that pollinators in real environments are continually exposed to cocktails of many pesticides, rather than single chemicals for relatively short periods. As Matt Shardlow, chief executive of conservation charity Buglife, said:

> These studies may not show an impact on honeybee health [at low levels], but then the studies are not realistic. The bees were not exposed to the neonics that we know are in planting dust, water drunk by bees and wildflowers, wherever neonics are used as seed treatments. This secret evidence highlights the profound weakness of regulatory tests.

Professor Dave Goulson explained, on Farming Today, that there were 20,000 species of bees and that neonics are neurotoxins that harm bumble bees, wild solitary bees and all insects. He added that there are a huge number of studies indicating the damage done and only a few that find them safe.

He reminds us on his blog that a recent Swedish study, published in the most prestigious scientific journal in the world (Nature), showed huge impacts of neonics on bumblebees and solitary bees when the chemicals were used by farmers 'as directed on the label' and adds a warning:

> Remember that, 50 years ago, the agrochemical industry assured us that DDT was safe, until it turned out that it wasn't. Later, they told us that organophosphates were fine, except they weren't. Do you believe them this time? I don't.
