

Trillions of Dead Bees and Bayer

An online search for the most current info on Colony Collapse Disorder brings you straight to the perpetrator, Bayer Corporation, right in our own backyard here in Berkeley. The headlines are alarming.. "Wikileaks Reveals to the World that EPA allowed the killing of Honeybees"; "Entire Food Chain Contaminated"; "New Research Should Nail the Coffin Lid Shut on a Toxic Bee-Killing Pesticide"; "Have Bees Become Canaries in the Coal Mine?" ...and rightfully so.

The world honeybee population has plunged in recent years, worrying farmers and beekeepers who know how critical bee pollination is for many crops. It is often said we have bees to thank for one out of every three bites we take of food. In addition to producing honey, honey bees literally crisscross the US pollinating almonds, oranges, melons, blueberries, pumpkins, and more. Other species of bees, both social and solitary, pollinate other crops. All species are in decline.

A leaked EPA document reveals that the agency allowed the widespread use of a bee toxic pesticide despite warnings from EPA scientists. The wikileaks document which was leaked to a Colorado beekeeper, shows that the EPA has ignored warning about the use of clothianidin, the pesticide produced by Bayer that is used mainly to treat corn seeds.. The pesticide scooped up \$262 million in sales in 2009 by farmers who use it on canola, soy, sugar beets, sunflowers, and wheat. The leaked doc was put out in response to Bayer' request to approve use of the pesticide on cotton and mustard. The doc validates a prior Bayer study that justified the registration of clothianidin on the basis of its safety to honeybees: "Clotininid's major risk concern is to non-target insects [honeybees]. Clotininid is a neonicotinoid insecticide that is both persistent and systemic. Acute toxicity studies to honeybees show that it is highly toxic on both a contact and oral basis."

The entire 101 page memo is damning. But the opinion of EPA scientists apparently isn't enough for the agency which is allowing Clotininid to keep its registration. Suspicions about Clotininid aren't new, the EPA's Environmental Fate and Effects Division first expressed concern when the pesticide was introduced in 2003, "the possibility of toxic exposure to non-target pollinators thru the translocation of Clotininid residue that result from seed treatment." It was still allowed on the market while Bayer worked on a botched toxicity study.

Clotininid has already been banned by Germany, Italy, France, Slovenia for its toxic effects.. So, why won't the EPA follow? Let's recall the dark side of Bayer's history: During World War II, Bayer became part of IG Farben, a German chemical conglomerate. IG Farben used slave labor in factories, notably the sub-camps of Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp. IG Farben owned 42.5% of the company that manufactured Zyklon B, a chemical used in the gas chambers of Auschwitz. After World War II, the Allies broke up IG Farben and Bayer reappeared as an individual business. The Bayer executive Fritz ter Meer, sentenced to 7 years in prison by the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal, was made head of the supervisory board in 1956 after his release.

HIV infected Blood Products: After 1978, there were four major companies engaged in the manufacture, production and sale of Factor VIII and IX. Bayer's biological division, Cutter was one... It is believed that these companies recruited and paid donors from high risk population, including prisoners and IV drug users to obtain blood plasma for the production of Factor VIII and IX.. Companies failed to exclude donors, as mandated by Federal Law, with a history of viral hepatitis. These products were likely to be contaminated with HIV or HCV and resulted in mass infection and deaths of thousands worldwide. Baycol: After 52 deaths were blamed on a side effect of Bayer's anti-cholesterol drug Baycol, its manufacture and sales were discontinued in 2001.

What actions have been taken to ban this toxic chemical?

Avaaz.org launched an online petition in 2011 to ban neonicotinoid pesticides. On March 27th, 2012, Beyond Pesticides joined beekeepers and environmental groups, Center for Food Safety, and Pesticide Action Network of North America in filing an emergency petition that calls on EPA to suspend registration of Bayer's controversial bee-killing pesticide Clothodid. Because Congress has the authority to exercise authority over federal agencies like the EPA, the organizations are calling on the public to ask Congress to protect and wild pollinators from this chemical and other chemicals known to be toxic to bees. Bees and other pollinators are still dying off at catastrophic rates, commercial beekeepers lost an average of 36% of their hives last year. As the public debate over CCD, a syndrome in which bees seemingly abandon their hives, carries on in the media, more and more new science has shown that neonicotinoid pesticides are indeed a critical piece of the puzzle. We must pressure EPA to take action and ban this pesticide. We must urge Congress to step up to this task. 12.5 million people have signed the petition already.

Meanwhile, spring is here and what does that mean for the bees and the beekeepers? The entire ecological system depends on pollinators. The fact that Bayer continuously disregards all studies and reports that show the danger and harmful effects of neonicotinoids proves deliberate and cynical blindness. Neonicotinoids have been banned in several countries and yet Bayer continues to market their products globally. Although Bayer has been informed about the causes of bee deaths for many years and protests have increased from year to year, the company refuses to take action for purely profit related reasons, and attempts time and time again to distract attention from its irresponsibility.

Bees are dying. Ask Congress to step up: <http://bit.ly/GJMC92>

Pesticide Action Network Site: <http://www.panna.org/>

One million Americans Petition EPA to ban Clothianidin as 'highly toxic' to honeybees: <http://bit.ly/HsQjPd>

Wikileaks reveals to world that EPA allowed the killing of honeybees: <http://bit.ly/lcmKH2>

Beyond Pesticides website: <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/>

