



Council of the  
European Union

Brussels, 5 November 2014  
(OR. en)

14966/14

AGRI 670  
AGRIORG 150  
AGRILEG 213

**NOTE**

---

From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations

---

Subject: Ministerial Conference "Protection of Honey Bee in Europe"  
(Maribor, 22 August 2014)  
- Information from the Slovenian delegation

---

Delegations will find attached in Annex an information note from the Slovenian delegation to be presented under "Any other business" at the Council ("Agriculture and Fisheries") at its session on 10-11 November 2014.

In the margins of 52<sup>nd</sup> International Fair of Agriculture and Food, a ministerial conference on Protection of Honey Bee in Europe was held in organisation of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment of the Republic of Slovenia<sup>1</sup>. The participants discussed the importance of honey bees and beekeeping, the risk factors causing honey bee losses and proposals for their protection.

In areas with intensive agriculture honey bees are endangered due to environmental threats and climate change impacts and their existence is largely dependent on human action. It is a matter of concern that the probability of the existence of bee colonies has substantially diminished due to varroa infestation and other non-native diseases. Furthermore, beekeeping aimed at maximising economic efficiency causes an additional burden.

The participants pointed out that the successful management of honey bee population can only be ensured if proper conditions for sustainable development of beekeeping are met. As targeted actions aimed at ensuring honey bee protection management are currently limited due to insufficient knowledge and legal framework in some fields, a common approach in the field of (1) biodiversity conservation, (2) global environmental change, (3) food safety and (4) promotion is much needed, in particular a legal framework laying down standards for residues of problematic substances in comb foundations and bee feed composition.

Good R&D practices of bee health protection and bee genetics, transfer of know-how, training of farmers and beekeepers were also presented at the conference.

Participating countries compared legislation in place on financial aid in the beekeeping sector in the case of natural disaster or loss of pasture due to weather events and regretted that beekeepers have most often difficulties in obtaining state aid in the case of natural disasters as it is not enabled by the European legislation.

---

<sup>1</sup> From 05/09/2014 Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of the Republic of Slovenia.

Participating countries expressed their commitment to put additional efforts, on the one hand to educate and train beekeepers and on the other to raise public awareness about the importance of beekeeping and bee preservation, with the emphasis on maintaining the clean and healthy environment and rural areas. A special importance was given to the exchange of information on activities carried out to raise public awareness about the importance of bees such as Honey Breakfast and a Bee App.

At the end of the ministerial conference a Joint Declaration (see Annex to the note) laying down guidance and specific action proposals to reduce the threats to the existence of honey bees in Europe was adopted by the following participating countries: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Moldova and Slovenia.

## Annex to the note

### **Joint Declaration of the Ministerial Conference “Protection of Honey Bee in Europe”, 22 August 2014, Maribor**

Under the initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment of the Republic of Slovenia<sup>2</sup> the ministers responsible for agriculture met on 22 August 2014 in Maribor, to discuss the importance of honey bees and beekeeping, the risk factors causing honey bee losses and proposals for their protection.

In areas with intensive agriculture honey bees are endangered due to environmental threats and climate change impacts. Mostly affected by the decline in honey bee population is fruit and seed production as being dependent on pollination by bees. The probability of the existence of bee colonies has substantially diminished due to varroa infestation and other non-native diseases.

With the aim to contribute to protection of honey bees, the participating representatives of Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Moldova and Slovenia adopted the following conclusions. We

1. POINT OUT that bees and their work have a positive impact on the entire ecosystem and biodiversity protection. Their most important role is pollination of plants, whereby they contribute to effective agricultural production that is key to ensuring food security.
2. REITERATE that honey bees in Europe are endangered and their existence is largely dependent on human action; and RECOGNISE that targeted measures are currently limited due to insufficient knowledge and legal framework in some fields.
3. STRESS the need to establish a common approach to ensure honey bee protection management; and REAFFIRM that specific measures aimed at reducing the threats to the existence of honey bees in Europe are of outmost importance.

---

<sup>2</sup> From 05/09/2014 Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of the Republic of Slovenia.

4. SINGLE OUT the importance of access to more research and respective findings as well as incorporating them into honey bee management policies as well as greater coordination of the various research projects, in order to make more effective the results achieved. Research and innovation in the field of agriculture are important levers for improving the competitiveness of beekeepers.
5. EMPHASISE the need to maintain local diversity of native honey bee populations, which includes adequate restriction and control of gene migration.
6. ACKNOWLEDGE that the beekeeping sector is dependent on a large scale on weather conditions; and REGRET that beekeepers have most often difficulties in obtaining state aid in the case of natural disasters as it is not enabled by the European legislation. The beekeepers should be appropriately compensated by national support at the national level given the fact that bees contribute to the '80% pollination of plants.
7. Bearing in mind that the development of bee colonies is threatened by the use of products to combat diseases and pests in bee colonies and with a view to ensure health and survival of honey bee population and adequate quality of bee products, CALL for establishing a legal framework laying down standards for residues of problematic substances in comb foundations and bee feed composition.
8. LOOK FORWARD to putting additional efforts, on the one hand to educate and train beekeepers and on the other to raise public awareness about the importance of beekeeping and bee preservation, with the emphasis on maintaining the clean and healthy environment and rural areas.
9. REAFFIRM that as most habits are formed in childhood, a special focus should be placed on promotion and educational actions targeting the youth, such as a Honey Breakfast or a Bee App and other adequate ways to address young people.

Adopted in Maribor, on 22 August 2014.