



Council of the  
European Union

Brussels, 12 November 2019  
(OR. en)

14036/19

AGRI 542  
AGRIFIN 74  
AGRIORG 81

**NOTE**

---

From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations  
Subject: Increasing difficulties in the apiculture sector  
- *Information from the Hungarian delegation*

---

Delegations will find in Annex information received from the Hungarian delegation on the above-mentioned subject to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council on 18 November 2019.

**Increasing difficulties in the apiculture sector**

The apiculture sector is an integral part of European agriculture providing full-time or part-time livelihood for more than 600.000 EU citizens. The importance of the apiculture sector, however, reaches beyond the contribution to the Gross Domestic Product of the economy, since over 80% of crop yield and 3/4<sup>th</sup> of the European food production volume depend on bee pollination.

According to the estimate of the French National Agricultural Research Institute, about 15 billion euros worth of agricultural production may be attributed to directly pollinating insects.

Besides direct pollination the sector plays an indispensable role in maintaining ecologic balance and biodiversity. The analysis of an international research network called COLOSS set up by the Beekeeping Institute of the University of Bern shows that mass death of domestic bees in Europe is a recurring problem every year. The experts of the institute concluded that the negative trend, although showing some fluctuation, seems to be a long term one. Experience shows that winter death of bees grew from the former percentage of 5-10 to 25-40%. Besides winter death bee colonies collapse increasingly in summer too. Experts maintain that the main causes are urbanisation, monoculture, bee diseases, non-pollination friendly plant protection methods and other stress factors. The COLOSS report points out to the fact that Southern and Western European bee colonies suffered the biggest loss last year. One third of the colonies in Portugal did not survive until spring, and the devastation amounted to 25% also in Slovenia, UK, Italy and Spain.

The profitability of the apiculture sector in Hungary has gone down by 50% compared to the average of the last 5 years and the trend is likely to continue. Concessions in honey provided for third countries within the frame of international free trade agreements with the EU further increase the import pressure. These effects often result in abandoning apiculture, whereby the number of beekeepers and the domestic bees decrease.

The importance of the apiculture sector is more than just the mere problem of beekeepers, urgent measures need to be taken to protect domestic bees.

Imported apiculture products often have much poorer quality than the ones marketed within the union. EU products do not have an advantage on the single EU market because of the lack of adequate traceability. The current system of labelling does not help EU citizens with appropriate information.

In an effort to prevent further worsening of the current bee crisis it is indispensable to provide increasing support for beekeepers. In the light of the above mentioned Hungary

- proposes to increase the budget of the currently running apiculture programmes with special attention to reinforcing disease control in apiculture. This measure would alleviate the consequences of bee colony collapse.
- requests the Commission to analyse - as a mid-term measure - the causes of bee stock reduction. In the light of the findings, to make a proposal to potentially address the current bee crisis.
- proposes to provide a higher degree of flexibility for Member States for the transfer between pillars in the next CAP period. As a third option transfer to sectorial programmes within the CAP Strategic Plan regulation should also be allowed either from EAGF or EAFRD.
- proposes to modify apiculture subsidies proposed for the next CAP period and make it possible to provide aid for the purchase of beehives, artificial honeycomb and sugar in the framework of the quality improvement measure in Article 49 (1h) of the CAP Strategic Plan regulation.
- asks the Commission to consider a prompt recast of geographical indication of apicultural products and traceability obligations based on EP report on “Prospects and challenges for the EU apiculture sector” adopted on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2018. These measures may improve the current economic situation of the sector.
- encourages the Commission to examine the possibility of creating a separate support scheme for the promotion of honey and apicultural products on the internal market and in third countries based on EU Regulation 1144/2014 of the European Parliament and the Council.