

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 26, 2012

Lisa P. Jackson, Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
Ariel Rios Building
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Jackson,

The declining health of our nation's honey bees has become an increasing concern in terms of the agricultural and environmental consequences that follow Colony Collapse Disorder. The disappearance of the honey bees has been linked to certain pesticides, and while we commend the EPA for making the re-evaluation of these particular pesticides a priority in the registration review program, we request that the agency establish a more finite and expedited timeline for addressing these serious concerns.

The pesticides in question belong to a class known as neonicotinoids (clothianidin, thiamethoxam, imidacloprid) that can be highly toxic to honey bees and other pollinators. Neonicotinoids are particularly risky because in addition to being acutely toxic in high doses, exposure also can result in serious sublethal effects when insects are exposed to chronic low doses. Research has shown that neonicotinoid exposure can cause significant problems for honey bee health, including disruptions in mobility, navigation, feeding, foraging, memory, learning, and overall hive activity. Pesticides are also believed to affect honey bees' immune systems, making them more vulnerable to parasites and other pathogens.

Concerned with the adverse effects of neonicotinoid products, including the high toxicity of clothianidin and the potential long-term effects to honey bees, environmental persistence, possible role as an endocrine disrupter, chronic toxic risk to non-endangered and endangered small birds, and acute/chronic toxicity to non-endangered and endangered mammals, states have started to take action on this issue. For example, in the State of New York in 2005 and again in 2007, the Department of Environmental Conservation rejected neonicotinoid products that EPA had approved.

Protecting honey bees and other pollinators is vital to American agriculture. In fact, one in three bites of food is reliant on honey bee pollination, and threats to pollinators concern the entire food system and could drive up the cost of food in this country. Highlighting the economic importance of pollinators, a recent study by Cornell University found that insect pollination results in a value of more than \$15 billion annually. A single beekeeper pollinating almonds, blueberries, pumpkins, apples, and cherries can result in an estimated \$5 million value to the agricultural economy.

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We are concerned about the future of our nation's honey bees, native bees and other pollinators, and while EPA recently began the registration reviews of thiamethoxam and clothianidin, the agency's own schedule does not call for completion of those reviews until 2018. It would be far too risky to wait that long given the seriousness of the concerns raised. We believe it would be more appropriate to establish an expedited deadline for completing the reviews. We expect that by the end of 2013, the EPA will be able to come to a consensus on all neonicotinoids and if it is found necessary to protect honey bees and other pollinators, the EPA will act quickly to remove them from the market. We look forward to your response and working with the EPA on this critically important issue moving forward.

Sincerely,



Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator

Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator