

**Sent:** Thursday, April 30, 2009 6:47 AM

**Subject:** FARMING TODAY GETS ITS OWN BEEHIVE AND DEBATES IMPACT OF NEO-NICOTINOIDS ON BEES

Good morning beekeepers,

There was a very good opening debate marking the start of the Neo-Nicotinoid Wars on Farming Today this morning, Thursday April 30th 2009. If you click on the link below it will take you to the 'Radio 4 Listen Again' facility and you can hear the discussion between **Emma Hockridge of the Soil Association** and **Julian Little of Bayer Crop Science**.

As usual, Mr Little was asking the listeners to ignore research from France, Germany, Italy and other countries - and his theory is 'it's all down to varroa'. The programme also interviewed **Dr Bonmatin from University of Montpellier** in France - possibly the first time on British media.

Emma Hockridge emphasised the recent news from France, namely that bees kept among intensive arable crops continued to die whereas those kept in upland forested areas - away from arable pesticides - were thriving.

Go to:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b00jwy8h/Farming\\_Today\\_30\\_04\\_2009/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b00jwy8h/Farming_Today_30_04_2009/)

Click on the link and drag the content bar to around 5 minutes 45 seconds to hear this 5 minute piece.

The other news is that Farming Today have also acquired their own beehive and intend to report on its progress and survival regularly - so it looks like the BBC is waking up to the pesticide issue and we may be seeing the first crack in the dam. It is quite clear however that Hillary Benn, DEFRA and BBKA are adamant that 'there is no problem with pesticides'; so no change there.

All good news - at least the debate is happening and truth will out.

Graham White  
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Also see Press Release from the Soil Association

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Agricultural Journalist, Denmark

11:00am Thursday 23rd April 2009

The Soil Association today condemned Hilary Benn's decision not to ban chemicals known to kill honeybees. In a letter to the Soil Association, the Secretary of State for the Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) has rejected calls to prohibit use of the group of pesticides (Neonicotinoids), which have already been withdrawn in France, Germany, Italy and Slovenia. There is now a mounting body of evidence from other European countries of the damaging effects these insecticides have on the neurological and immune systems of honeybees.

Hilary Benn's decision coincides with the opening today of the laboratory of Apiculture and Social Insects, and follows his announcement of £4.3 million of funding to try and save the British honeybee. 30% of British honey bees died during the 2007/8 winter, mirroring massive losses of bees worldwide.

Peter Melchett, Soil Association Policy Director said: "***While new funding and new research are welcome, it will not help if the Government ignores existing scientific evidence that has led other countries to ban chemicals known to kill bees. The Government prefers to blame 'very wet weather' and poor management by 'less experienced beekeepers' than to face their own responsibility to control bee-killing chemicals that have been used on up to 1.5 million acres of farmland in the UK.***"

Others are less frightened of facing facts - the Co-op has just donated £150,000 for their 10-point 'plan bee' to save the bees, and has banned the use on their farms of all Neonicotinoid sprays. The Soil Association has today published a briefing paper that supports the Co-op's position, and summarises the evidence of the damaging impacts of Neonicotinoids.

Bees are acutely susceptible to pesticides for a number of reasons. Honeybees have less detoxifying capacity in their bodies compared to some other insects, and this makes bees particularly susceptible to sub-lethal exposure to pesticides. Honeybees have also been found to have a higher number of the neurological receptors that are targeted by Neonicotinoids than other insects.

Honeybees have complex skills that are based on both innate and learned behaviour patterns in their quest for nectar and rely on the integrity of a nervous system where each synapse is crucial. So the disruption to the neurological signalling of honeybees by Neonicotinoids means that they become disorientated. The chemicals impair their communication, homing and foraging ability, flight activity, ability to smell (smell is also vital to bees' communication systems), and learning. Neonicotinoids also weaken the bees' immune system.

Honeybees do not live as individuals; they thrive as a colony. Therefore looking at what amounts to lethal doses of pesticide in individual bees, as is the case in most pesticide safety trials, does not tell us how neurological disruption will affect honeybees. This has

been recognised by other European governments, but in the UK, with one of the least effective systems of pesticide safety in Europe, official advice is that Neonicotinoids are 'safe' to use.