Pesticides & Bee-Friendly Certification

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Pesticide losses

- Most beekeepers will have had pesticide losses
- Especially if you do commercial pollination
- From misuse, drift, accidents and ‘nasties’
- Getting worse (?)
Global concerns about bee losses

- Bees & pollinators in general have been very much in the news in recent years
- Reporting on a ‘global pollination crisis’ and on a ‘global bee crisis’
- Increasing pesticide losses very much part of this narrative

Food security concerns

- Fears that there will not be enough pollinators (primarily managed honey bees) to pollinate commercial crop plants
- And that it will have a dramatic impact on agricultural sustainability, food security and human survival
- Einstein’s “quote”
Political action
Lots of politics and protests

More Regulations
- Changes to regulations, including the banning of some pesticides
- More enforcement
- The ‘stick’
- Some question about how ‘safe’ you can make industrial-scale agriculture
Pollinator-friendly Farming

• The ‘carrot’ approach
• Using retailer and consumer pressure to change farming behaviour
• Especially attractive in countries where regulations are more guidelines than rules
• Used as marketing

Lots of Schemes

• Many such schemes over the past 10 years
• Lots of traction
• Maybe the biggest is Waitrose with a ‘7 point plan to protect pollinators’
Do they actually work?

- Many schemes but few, if any, seem to be fully developed
- Little detail available
- Still believe that they have potential, and could be an important component in limiting bee losses

Bee-Friendly Scheme in RSA

- Presently developing a Bee-Friendly Certification scheme in South Africa
- Motivated by continuing losses on some crops, and by limited regulatory response and capacity
- With a major retail group
- Hoped to be able to give you the final scheme, but corporates move at their own pace – so still work in progress
RSA Scheme

- Based on three existing & successful programmes
- Two schemes that have good market penetration
- SASSI (South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative)
- Badger-Friendly Honey
- And the successful IPW (Integrated Production of Wine) auditing system

Considerations

- Company or Country (RSA)?
- Internal audit (company) or independent audit?
- Self-audit (reporting) or inspection-based?
- Honey bees only or all pollinators?
- Primary products only (say fruit) or everything that has some insect pollination component?
- How will it work? Colour scheme? Logo's?
Considerations – What to audit?

• Pesticide load, but how?
• Crop based (so score best available options for that crop)
• Part of an IPM programme
• General stewardship practices (no misuse, no off-label use, only genuine products, avoid drift, manage seed dust)

Considerations – What to audit?

• Bee forage provision on the farm
• Forage credits (on other land)
• Green infrastructure (verges, margins, inter-cropping)
• Diversified crops (non monoculture)
• Beekeeping practices (codes of conduct for beekeepers with respect to management of ants, diseases, badgers)
• Indigenous forage / biodiversity
Considerations – What to audit?

- Pollution?
- Land-use practices such as water management, waste management and fire management?
- Alien plant control?
- GM crops?
- BEE (Black Economic Empowerment)?

“Bee Miles” loyalty programme

- Products have values / credits based on their bee component (e.g. apple > nougat)
- And the bee-friendliness of that bee component
- That will reward bee-friendly farming sufficiently to warrant changes in pesticide usage
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