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Post: Ottawa

Ontario proposes restrictions on neonicotinoid-treated seeds

Report Categories:

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

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Report Highlights:

The province of Ontario on March 23, 2015, opened a public consultation period on a proposed regulatory change aimed at reducing the use of neonicotinoids (NNI) as seed treatments for corn and soybeans as a means of improving pollinator health. The proposed change would introduce new requirements for the sale and use of NNI-treated seeds. Comments on the proposed regulatory change are due to the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change prior to May 7, 2015. The target date for implementation is July 1, 2015.

General Information:

In November 2014 the province of Ontario posted for public comments a discussion paper, [Pollinator Health: A Proposal for Enhancing Pollinator Health and Reducing the Use of Neonicotinoid Pesticides in Ontario](#), which focused on the need to improve pollinator health. The paper noted the increase in mortality rates for Ontario honey bee colonies, particularly during the winter. Over-winter die-off in 2014, for example, reached 58 percent. The paper cited Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) September 2013 Notice of Intent to introduce mitigation measures for planting of NNI-treated corn and soybean seed which stated that PMRA "has determined that current agricultural practices related to the use of NNI [1] -treated corn and soybean seed are affecting the environment due to their impacts on bees and other pollinators. [2]" (Note: PMRA's November 2014 [Update on Neonicotinoid Pesticides and Bee Health](#) noted that "The weight of evidence indicated that exposure to dust generated during planting of neonicotinoid treated corn and soybean seed contributed to bee mortalities in 2012 and 2013.") An Ontario Bee Health Working Group had been formed in 2013 to develop a mitigation strategy for use of NNI's and a provincial Pollinator Health Action Plan focused on four categories of stressors to pollinator health: pollinator habitat and nutrition, pesticide exposure, disease, pests and genetics, and climate change and weather.

The Pollinator Health Action Plan has two key objectives: to reduce the over-winter honey bee mortality rate to 15 percent by 2020, and to reduce the number of acres planted with NNI-treated corn and soybean seed by 80 percent by 2017. Of the 2.4 million acres planted to corn and 2.5 million acres planted to soybeans in Ontario, the government estimated that NNI-treated seeds are used on 99 percent of corn and 60 percent of soybeans.

On March 23, 2015, the government of Ontario's Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change opened a public consultation period on the proposed regulatory change aimed at reducing the use of neonicotinoids (NNI) as seed treatments for corn and soybeans as a means of improving pollinator health. The proposed draft "[Regulatory Amendments to Ontario Regulation 63/09 under the Pesticides Act to Reduce the Use of Neonicotinoid Insecticides](#)" would expand the scope of Ontario's current pesticide regulation to cover NNI-treated seed. The proposed regulation would require farmers to complete training in integrated pest management (IPM) prior to purchase of NNI-treated seeds. In 2016 the purchaser could buy NNI-treated seeds for up to 50 percent of land to be planted to corn or soybeans. However, to exceed that purchase amount in 2016 and in later years, the buyer would need to provide a pest assessment report which documents the presence and numbers of specific pests and/or crop damage inflicted by such pest. Instructions for the use of NNI-treated seed would also be required. Distributors of seed would need to be licensed, to provide information on NNI-treated seeds to customers, to have available non NNI-treated seeds, to ensure that any buyers have completed IPM training, and to maintain and/or submit sales and other records.

[New Regulatory Requirements to Protect Pollinators](#), available on the government of Ontario website, summarizes these new proposed requirements. Comments on the proposed regulatory change are due to the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change prior to May 7, 2015, and must reference EBR Registry number 012-3733. Comments can be submitted to:

ONTARIO POLLINATOR HEALTH
Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change
Climate Change and Environmental Policy Division
Strategic Policy Branch
77 Wellesley Street West
Floor 11
Ferguson Block
Toronto Ontario
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Phone: (416) 314-7562
Fax: (416) 325-8181

Comments may also be submitted online using the 'Submit Comment' button at

[http://www.ebr.gov.on.ca/ERS-WEB-External/displaynoticecontent.do?noticeId=MTI0Njl4&statusId=MTg3NjY4&language=en.](http://www.ebr.gov.on.ca/ERS-WEB-External/displaynoticecontent.do?noticeId=MTI0Njl4&statusId=MTg3NjY4&language=en)

^[1] Neonicotinoid insecticides, specifically, imidacloprid, thiamethoxam, clothianidin

^[2] [Notice of Intent, NOI2013-01, Action to Protect Bees from Exposure to Neonicotinoid Pesticides](#)