



Help Protect Minnesota Pollinators

In 2016, Minnesota took steps to become the most pollinator-friendly state in the country — but our work isn't done. Harmful pesticide seed coatings are still a big problem for bees across the state.

In the 2014-2015 season, Minnesota beekeepers reported losing more than 50 percent of their bees. In addition to managed honey bee losses, Minnesota's 400 species of native bees are also in decline. Already, many Minnesota counties lack sufficient native pollinators to support the crops in those areas.¹

Why are bees and other pollinators in trouble? Scientists agree: multiple, interacting factors are contributing to declining populations, including pesticides, habitat loss, diseases and parasites.

Bees support healthy farms

Pollinators are critical to the state's agricultural economy. Key crops grown in the state — like melons, cucumbers, squash, strawberries, apricots and berries — rely on honey bees and other pollinators to flourish. Pollination is also essential for Minnesota's top fruit crop, apples, which are valued at \$17.7 million.²

Minnesota has also historically been one of the top five honey-producing states in the country, with honey production contributing \$16.3 million in 2014 towards the state's agricultural economy.² However, due in large part to bee losses in recent years, Minnesota honey production is falling.

Minnesota is stepping up

Last year, Governor Dayton and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture announced a commitment to protecting vital pollinators across the state — and they need support from all of us to ensure Minnesota has healthy pollinators and thriving farms for years to come.

Neonic seed coatings don't measure up

Neonics are the most widely used insecticide in the country — often used as coatings on seeds — and they pose a clear threat to pollinator health.

- **Nearly all of the corn seeds, and at least a third of soybeans** planted nationwide have been pre-coated with these bee-harming pesticides.
- In 2014, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found that for soybeans, **"neonicotinoid seed treatments likely provide \$0 in benefits to growers."**³
- For crops like corn, soybeans, dry beans, wheat and canola, studies show that **neonicotinoid seed coatings fail to consistently increase yield** or farmer profits, especially in climates like Minnesota's.⁴
- **USDA research has shown that for soybeans, neonic seed coatings on soybeans can make pest problems worse:** *"In slug-infested fields, soybean grown without neonicotinoid seed treatments produced higher plant populations and yields than their treated counterparts."*⁶
- Farmers report that while neonic-free seeds are available, they can be very hard to find.

Speak up to protect pollinators & support farmers

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is committed to protecting pollinators and supporting farmers across the state. But thanks to a policy loophole, the agency needs the new bills passed by the Legislature to allow them to address the problem of neonic seed coatings.

Contact your elected representatives today and urge their support of legislation that would:

- ✓ Create a treated seed program so Minnesota can track and regulate seed treatments like other pesticide uses, and fund research on the efficacy of seed treatments; and
- ✓ Create a "pollinator protection account" to fund activities that reduce impacts from pesticides on pollinators. Support inclusion of pollinator account in bills HF 895 and SF 780

Send a message to your legislators

Legislators need to know that this issue matters to you. Setting up an in-person meeting, asking a question at a town hall meeting, sending a personal letter or email, or making a phone call to your legislator could help Minnesota become a leader in pollinator protection. Share your own message, or use this one:

"I'm concerned about Minnesota's bees, butterflies and other pollinators. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture has found that neonicotinoids are one of the factors driving bee declines, and this session you have a chance to take action on this issue.

I support the Department of Agriculture's legislation to tackle the problem of pesticide seed coatings and create a pollinator protection account. To solve the pollinator problem and safeguard our food system, we need to take action on bee-harming pesticides."

For too long, pesticide corporations have ensured that most of the seeds available to farmers are coated with bee-harming chemicals. It's time for that to change.

Have questions or want to get more involved? Contact Lex Horan at lex@panna.org or 651.245.1733

Resources cited or referenced

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2. USDA Minnesota agricultural data: [Value of crops](#) (2015) & [value of honey production](#) (2014)
3. Center for Food Safety, "[Heavy Costs: Weighing the Value of Neonicotinoid Insecticides in Agriculture.](#)" 2014

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