



Julie Girling MEP



Working for Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire, Somerset, Wiltshire, Gibraltar and the Isles of Scilly

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GIRLING “OVER THE MOON” WITH COMMISSION RESPONSE

The European Commission has issued its response about the decline of bees and honeybees to Julie Girling, MEP for the South West. Julie, who is running her own campaign to Save the Bee through her website, www.juliegirling.com had asked the Commission to indicate what progress they have made to protect bees so far and, what plans they had to ensure their future survival

The response from The Commission indicates that the various EU protection projects, BEE DOC and STEP are going well and have already achieved positive results. Finally, the Commission intends to designate an EU Reference Laboratory for bee health which is expected to become operational by the first half of 2011. It is also envisaged to start a pilot program for bee health surveillance with the technical support of this laboratory as soon as possible to determine more precisely the entirety of the colony losses and collect more data about the possible causes.

Speaking following the publication of Commissions response, Julie commented, **“I am over the moon that the EU is taking this issue seriously and particularly happy about the introduction of bee health surveillance plan. I have campaigned for a comprehensive bee health strategy to ensure the survival of bees in the UK and across Europe and I hope that this programme will go some way to saving our bee populations.**

The results from the EU BEE DOC project and the STEP project, two initiatives designed to research and conserve bee populations, are extremely promising. I will continue to campaign for the protection of our bees and push to ensure Governments encourage sustainable, pollinator friendly farming practices.”

With 76% of food production and 84% of plant species dependent on pollination by bees, it is essential that we fight for their protection and survival. I encourage people to sign up to my campaign at www.juliegirling.com.”

To sign up to Julie’s campaign to Save the Bee, visit www.juliegirling.com

Ends

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Full text of Julies question to the Commission:

Question for written answer E-7852/2010

to the Commission

Rule 117

Julie Girling (ECR)

Subject: Campaigning for the humble bumble

The Commission is aware of serious concerns regarding the future of our most important insect, the bee. In South West England, there are a number of awareness campaigns designed to help protect the bee from the continued threat of decline. The decline of honey bees represents a major loss in biodiversity, as honey bees are not only responsible for producing honey, but play a vital role in pollinating plants for food and other crops.

The Women's Institute, which is a key organisation in the UK leading the fight to protect our humble bumbles, maintains that approximately one third of our human diet is directly dependent on bees, making them central to our existence. In the natural environment, bees are also responsible for pollinating around 90% of the wild plants which produce seeds and fruits on which birds and wild animals depend, thus making them even more central to our world's existence.

Currently, honey bees are coming under threat from pests and diseases for which treatments are not fully understood or are ineffective. Many bee-keepers have experienced the complete destruction of their hives from such diseases, and the UK is losing its bee population at around 30% a year (up from just 6% in 2003). The UK has 250 species of bee, three of which have already become nationally extinct.

1. Can the Commission provide a report on the progress of the BEE DOC project (Bees in Europe and the Decline of Honeybee Colonies) which looks at honeybee pests and diseases and quantifies the impact of interactions between parasites, pathogens and pesticides on honeybee mortality, and the STEP project (Status and Trends of European Pollinators)?
2. What action does the Commission intend to take to protect these vital pollinators both in the short term and in the long term?
3. Does the Commission have information at Member State level to support action to encourage bee numbers and reverse their decline?

Full text of the Commission response:

E-7852/10EN

Answer given by Mr Dalli on behalf of the Commission (15.11.2010)

1. The BEE DOC project¹ started in March 2010. It deals with long-term complex research that needs to be repeated over several seasons. The first concrete results will be available by June 2011. At the beginning of September the project organised its first workshop².

The STEP project³ was initiated in February 2010 and will run for five years. Key activities already initiated include the development of a bee Red List for Europe to help to guide conservation activities at continental and national levels and assessment and recommendations for how agri-environment schemes across Europe can be best utilised to support pollinators.

2. The Commission intends to designate an EU Reference Laboratory for bee health which is expected to become operational by the first half of 2011. It is also envisaged to start a pilot program for bee health surveillance with the technical support of this laboratory as soon as possible to determine more precisely the entirety of the colony losses and collect more data about the possible causes. The first ever bee health training course for officials of Member States

¹ <http://www.bee-doc.eu/>

² Diagnostics in honeybees, from sampling to data analysis:
<http://www.beedoc.eu/docs/Invitation%20Workshop%20Ghent%202010.pdf>

³ www.STEP-project.net

under the Better Training for Safer Food initiative⁴ started in May 2010 with two courses already delivered and two more in 2011.

3. Measures relating to bee-keeping are set down in the Single CMO Regulation⁵. These may be included in tri-annual apiculture programmes drawn up by Member States which, if considered eligible, can be part-financed by the EU. In September 2010 the Commission approved the national programmes of the 27 Member States to improve the production and marketing of apiculture products for the period 2011-2013. The EU contribution to the financing of the programmes has increased by almost 25 percent compared to the previous period (2008-2010), from EUR 26 million to EUR 32 million per year. Part of the expenditure is devoted to varroasis prevention and the restocking of hives.

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/food/training_strategy/training/health_bees_exotic_animals_en.htm

⁵ Council Regulation (EC) No 1234/2007 establishing a common organisation of agricultural markets and on specific provisions for certain agricultural products, OJ L 299, 16.11.2007, Article 106 thereof