

Doan Family Farms

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March 22, 2007

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Agriculture
Subcommittee on Horticulture and Organic Agriculture
Room 1301, Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6001

Dear Sir or Madam:

My name is James Doan. I live in western New York State with my wife and two children. I owned and operated 4,300 hives of honeybees in the fall of 2006 for honey production. Currently I have about 1,900 hives left of the original 4,300. These same hives are also rented out in the surrounding western New York Agriculture community for fruit and vegetable pollination. The hives are then also transported down to central Florida in the winter months for the same jobs of Honey production and pollination services.

I consider this testimony a privilege, and I am honored to speak before you today too voice my concerns regarding the serious and devastation loss of my honey bees here in the United States, but more importantly how I feel it is effecting the infrastructure of Agriculture.

In my business hive management is everything. My overall system has changed little over the past twenty some years now, with the exception of treatments for hive pest management. However, the overall health of my beehives has always been consistent for being good profitable hives.

Starting in the spring of 2006 I began seeing a change in hive health. Not only was I seeing this, but many other beekeepers in western New York also saw the same. Typical scenario was that the honeybees were not expanding in numbers, and not making honey. Then finally an empty hive, with even in some instances some honey left behind.

Yes, weather conditions in the northeast in the fall of 2006 were wet and cold, with many counties in New York State declaring a disaster. However, in the northeast we have had wet fall weather before and still our fall honey productions were moderate.

Honeybee losses across New York State this winter are being reported at fifty percent or more, and some operations are reporting high as eighty percent losses. Because of the current cold weather many beekeepers have yet to fully inspect their hives, so the number of hive losses could escalate. To recoup their losses, a purchase of new hives or honeybee packages will have to be made. However, the breeders who sell these items have little to none in which to sell. The one breeder I spoke to could not deliver packages to me until May 15, to late for apple pollination. I believe the availability of honeybees for pollination services this spring in New York will be close, due to reports still coming in from area beekeepers.

New York State inspections officials when inspecting my hives in both states of New York and Florida showed low to zero mite counts in 2005 and 2006. So I believe that this Colony Collapse Disorder is not due to mite and other pest problems in my hives.

So what is it then, hot, cold, water, and drought??? We have had all of these conditions in the past but never with these consequences, and not every beekeeper throughout the country at the same time having honeybee losses. This problem does not seem to be in one region or another but everywhere including Canada. So what is different??? I do not know, but pesticides at sub-lethal dosages do need to be looked at. We have chemicals being used today that are different than materials in the past. In France, in May of 2004 the seed treatment GAUCHO was removed from use because of number one, "The results of the examination on the risks of the seeds treatment GAUCHO are alarming. The treatment of seeds by GAUCHO is a significant risk to honeybees in several stages of life." "The consumption of contaminated pollen can lead to an increased mortality of care-taking-bees." GAUCHO'S contains the active substance Imidacloprid. Materials with Imidacloprid in them in the last couple of years are labeled for use on just about every fruit and vegetable that I pollinate. Could this be the problem??? I do not know. However in France the year before GAUCHO was taken off the market one third of the honeybees in France died. They have not reported any significant losses since.

I firmly believe we need extensive additional research that confirms what this Colony Collapse Disorder is, and any future repercussions. We need this now!!! I know that Pennsylvania State University is working hard on this problem, as other honeybee labs across this country, which is excellent. However, the equipment being used is antiquated. Our industry needs government research dollars now! The economic impact on my operation is that it will cost me over \$200,000.00 to replace the honeybees that I have currently lost. I do not know if I will even have enough bees in New York State to cover our pollination contracts. This also has impacted my income from honey production and pollination service by the reduction from the lack of bees.

The United States is looking at the potential loss of a pillar in Agriculture. Agriculture in the whole United States is dependant on honeybees. If we cannot survive as a beekeeping industry here in this country, there will not be an agriculture community here in the US, period.

If this Colony Collapse Disorder is allowed to continue, you could be looking at a 100% dependency on foreign countries for feeding the American public. In my opinion this possible reality is unacceptable.

In conclusion I strongly urge you as my governmental officials to recommend funding for Honeybee research. I also would like to ask for your support in make public crop insurance for beekeepers. Finally, I ask for help in recouping our losses from this problem since we do not have crop insurance.

Thank you for your time and support for our industry.

Regards,

James E. Doan

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Please find listed below New York State Honeybee Pollinators who have lost significant (30% or more) of their honeybees in the year 2007 so far. The following beekeepers represent most of the honeybees used to pollinate in New York State.

Bruce Figel	NYS only
Edward Doan	NYS only
David Hackenburg	MD, NC, VI, NY, PA, FL, MA
James Doan	NYS, FL.
Paul Burt	FL, PA, CA, NY
Kevin Young	FL, PA, CA, NY
Robbie Bell	FL, NY
Paul Cappy	NY, FL
Larry Winters	NY, FL
Wes Collier	NY, FL
Tim Fisher	NY, FL, PA, MA
Tim Fisher	FL, NY, PA, MA
David Arters	NY, FL, MA
Jeff Rex	NY, FL, MA

Contents:

Page #1	Title
Page #2	Contents
Page #3- #5	Testimony
Page #6- #10	Articles on French & German Losses of Honeybees
Page #11- #16	What Growers need to do.
Page #17	Bayer Crop Science World- Imidacloprid
Page #18- #25	Assail Insecticide
Page #26- #34	Clothjanidin Field Studies
Page #35	New York State Pollinators
Page #36	Biography
Page #37	Disclosure Form

Testimony of James E. Doan
Given to the U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Agriculture
Subcommittee on Horticulture and Organic Agriculture

March 29, 2007

