



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH AND CONSUMERS DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Relations with agencies and advisory groups

**WORKING GROUP ON BEE HEALTH of the
ADVISORY GROUP ON THE FOOD CHAIN, ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH**

*Brussels, CCAB building
Wednesday 29 October 2014*

Summary Report

Stakeholders represented:

Members of Advisory Group: ECCA, ECPA, ESA, FVE, IFAH-Europe, PAN EUROPE.

Non-members of Advisory Group: BEE-LIFE, EPBA (European Professional Beekeepers Association)

EU Commission: DG SANCO: L. Miko, E. Poudelet, R. Vanhoorde, M. Walsh, M. Marini, A. Laddomada, L. Kuster, M. Paolino; DG AGRI: L. Bonafos, J.C. Cavitte, O. Diana, S. Gontard, A. Innamorati; DG ENV: J. Helbig; DG RTD: B. Atzel.

Oher EU bodies: EFSA F. Verdonck.

Chair: Mr L. Miko, Deputy Director General for the food chain

1. Welcome and adoption of the agenda

The Chair welcomed participants and summarised the background of the meeting and invited the participants to provide their views and suggestions for future activities. He highlighted the importance of active participation and proposing initiatives as the Commission's role is to facilitate and support the group by informing on EU activities. The participants adopted the agenda as proposed.

2. MUST-B (EFSA Project)

F. Verdonck (EFSA – Animal and Plants Unit) presented the EFSA project, which aims at developing a holistic approach for the Risk Assessment on MULTiple STressors in Bees and to produce annual updates to the technical report on the inventory of EFSA's activities in the area of bee health. It is a 5-year project involving a variety of actors (Scientists, Stakeholders, MSs, EURL, COM, EMA, EEA and other bodies).



EFSA presentation -
DG-SANCO_AG-WG-Be

Several questions were raised on the presentation: e.g. lack of clarity of the framework of the project and lack of beekeepers participation (Bee-life), and monitoring of beekeeping

practices (FVE), while ECPA questioned the multifactorial survey and competencies in relation to it.

The Chair referred to the complexity of the topic and the project, which will be relevant to future knowledge.

3. Update from animal health (pathogens) point of view

A. Laddomada (Head of Unit SANCO. G2 Animal Health) presented an update and an overview on the work carried out by SANCO, which includes the establishment of the EU Reference Laboratory as a key hub on bee health, the increased BTSF activities, the EPILOBEE project on bee health surveillance, which provided a reliable picture on bee mortality and colony losses and allowed for methodology harmonisation (for comparison of data). The result and analysis of the first year surveillance were discussed at the Commission Bee Health Conference in April, while for the second year of surveillance the results are still to arrive and to be assessed. Furthermore, the current EU co-financing for these activities, the possible future of EPILOBEE project as well as the recent issue of occurrence of small hive beetle in Italy were presented.



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The participants highlighted some particular elements of colony movements between Italy and the rest of Europe and an initiative which voluntarily cease sourcing of bees from Italy. They also queried in particular the lack of veterinary co-financing for Varroa eradication programmes and for compensation after destruction of colonies infected with small hive beetle in Italy, the follow-up actions on the basis of the results of EPILOBEE. They also highlighted the importance of looking at other species but *Apis mellifera*. The Commission explained the EU framework for animal health policies and the reasoning for the current absence of co-financing in that framework, in particular for the fight against Varroa, which, however, it is covered by other means (e.g. AGRI National apiculture programmes).

The Chair summarised that these are still preliminary results which need further analysis and reflection for a future possible extension of the project.

4. Overview of the latest project selected under the last call of FP7

B. Atzel (DG RTD.F3 Agri-Food Chain) gave an overview on completed and on-going projects and future perspectives. In particular, he highlighted the 9 projects running, under 4 specific programmes funded by European Commission Framework Programme 7. He briefly explained the Horizon 2020, which replaces current FP projects, where innovation and societal challenges are key elements for selection of future projects.



On-going EU research
projects on bees and i

5. Ongoing applied research projects in the framework of the national apiculture programmes 2014-2016

L. Bonafos (DG AGRI. DDG2.C.3 Animal products) provided an overview of EU statistics showing an increased number of hives against a decreasing number of beekeepers. She explained the National apiculture programme, the measures which are eligible for support and which are co-funded by European Commission at 50%. It emerged that the applied research, which is one of the available measures, represented only 5.01% of the expenditure in 2013, and that individual MSs, in consultation with the specific sectors, decide on the implementation of the measures. The examples provided illustrate the different national applied research approaches.



Applied research in
national apiculture pro

The discussion focused on the national programmes, claiming that part should be under veterinary law. Some participants also expressed a need for further veterinary training in the sector.

The Chair highlighted the evidence of possible overlapping activities and the difficulty in coordinating the sector calling for further reflection on future activities.

5. Presentations from stakeholders

“Monitoring drivers of pollination decline” – by M. Dermine, PAN-EUROPE, N. Simon-Delso, Bee Life – in order to contribute to the proposal on bee health, the presentation showed the factors determining pollinators decline and compared studies already carried out. The speakers proposed two projects a) MONIPOLLI, proposing a monitoring of factors affecting pollinators by using pollination units in 4 different environments; b) POLLINDICATOR, environmental monitoring of pesticides use through honey bees (including weekly samples of pollen pellets). Allowing for determination of active substances used, drafting a list of substances also useful for insects, monitor non-authorized substances.

The overall objectives are to evaluate the real situation of pesticides use in Europe (pollindicator) and monitor drivers of bee decline (climate, pathogens, chemicals...). This would result in the use of non-invasive monitoring systems; increase knowledge on environmental pollution; identify problematic areas (geographical and chemical terms); verify the efficacy of EU legislation in terms of environmental and food contamination.



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The Chair asked for some clarifications on the projects and stressed the methodological limitations.

“ECPA network and bee health actions” by G. Whitmore

ECPA presented the various projects undertaken in particular on seed treatment stewardship, Operation Pollinator habitat, forage, bio-d), control of pathogens and parasites, Bee Care Centre(s), and bee health monitoring activities. The presentation showed the key elements of the studies and actors involved. It proposed the

establishment of stakeholder platform with all key stakeholders involved to: agree priority actions, map existing initiatives to avoid redundancy, agree on proposal for governance and financing, agree roles and responsibilities and ways of working, set deadline for finalising project planning and establish timeline for 2015 activities.



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Conclusions and next steps:

- Complex sector with a lot of overlapping activities.
- Need for further analyses of the results of EPILOBEE project.
- EFSA's project will be a basic research for future managerial considerations.
- DG SANCO will continue to work to facilitate and support activities with interested stakeholders to help scope for a 2015 Workshop.
- The Commission encouraged the members of the working group to pursue, develop and agree on the content / areas to be discussed in such workshop should they wish to participate in this work. Commission will consider how to best support and facilitate this discussion.
- DG SANCO remains available to continue to inform of initiatives and developments on bee health.
- The Chair thanked the speakers and all participants for their active participation.
