

Preventing further bee deaths: European Parliament demands action

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The EU must do more to prevent bees dying in large numbers, the European Parliament demanded today. A large majority of MEPs demanded to use more money from the EU's research framework programme to find the root causes of this problem.

"The continuing death of bees can become a danger for food production, if there are fewer and fewer bees to pollinate the plants. The European Union must drastically increase its research budget, currently around 10 million Euros, to find out what environmental causes and illnesses are responsible for so many bees dying," EPP Group Member Astrid Lulling (Luxembourg) said.

To better investigate the effect of illnesses or other health hazards on honey bees, the European Parliament called for the introduction of 'reference hives'. The European Commission needs to come up with a three-year plan to get more exact figures on the number of hives in Europe, parliament said. In addition, new treatments against Varroa mites, which are implicated in some 10 percent of annual losses, are necessary. Combatting illnesses affecting bees should also be coordinated and financed in the framework of the EU's veterinary policy.

To promote the preservation of honey bees in Europe, the European Parliament also demanded more targeted support for the EU's 700 000 beekeepers. This would have to include origin-labelling for honey and honey products, and stricter EU-wide controls against counterfeit or low-quality honey.

"Better marketing of honey and honey products creates an incentive to boost honey production and thus look after European bee colonies," Lulling said.