

THIS REPORT CONTAINS ASSESSMENTS OF COMMODITY AND TRADE ISSUES MADE BY USDA STAFF AND NOT NECESSARILY STATEMENTS OF OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Voluntary - Public

Date: 9/21/2009

GAIN Report Number: IT9026

Italy

Post: Rome

Bees - Italy Suspends the Use of Certain Pesticides

Report Categories:

Agricultural Situation

Approved By:

Jim Dever

Prepared By:

Dana Biasetti

Report Highlights:

The Italian Ministry of Agriculture intends to extend its' suspension on certain insecticides (including neonicotinoids) used in corn cultivation until 2010. The decision to suspend these insecticides for another year was made in response to Italian beekeeper and environmentalist concerns about bee hive deaths. Sources report the suspension on these insecticides, which are used largely on corn seeds, has resulted in a 5 percent decrease in corn yields this year (in addition to the 10 percent decrease in corn area due to depressed market prices).

General Information:

Insecticides Ban Extended to 2010

The Italian Ministry of Agriculture intends to extend its suspension on certain insecticides (including neonicotinoids) used in corn cultivation until 2010. The decision to suspend these

insecticides for another year was made in response to Italian beekeeper and environmentalist concerns about bee hive deaths.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, there have been only two reported cases of bee hive deaths since the ban was implemented this year compared to 185 hive deaths last year. Italy has 75,000 bee-keepers and more than one million bee hives.

Minister Zaia is also quoted as saying, “we need to find a common road with the chemical-drug industries in order to find alternative products and practices that have less environmental impact but are equally effective.” Of note is that Zaia himself is a honey bee producer and produced some 90 kilos of honey in 2008.

The Italian farmer association Coldiretti estimates that a third of all agricultural products depend on insect pollination—80 percent of which is carried out by bees. If bees were to disappear, it would not only destroy Italy's 25 million euro honey industry but also affect dozens of other crops. Apples, pears, almonds, citrus fruits, peaches, kiwi, chestnuts, cherries, apricots, plums, melons, tomatoes, soy, and sunflowers all depend entirely or in part on bees. Bees are also vital for livestock production, given their important role in pollinating fodder.

Sources report the suspension on these insecticides, which are used largely on corn seeds, has resulted in a 5 percent decrease in corn yields this year (in addition to the 10 percent decrease in corn area due to depressed market prices).

For previous Post reporting on Bee Deaths and the use of insecticides please see IT8013 and IT7024.