



## PRESS RELEASE

16, NORTH ROAD, CARDIFF,  
CF10 3DY, UK.

TEL: +44 (0)29 2037 2409  
FAX: +44 (0)5601 135640  
Email: [mail@ibra.org.uk](mailto:mail@ibra.org.uk)

### **IBRA welcomes and supports today's EU Commission paper which outlines the need for more action on bee health in the EU.**

IBRA's Scientific Director, Norman Carreck says that it is excellent news that the importance of bees to the environment and agriculture has been recognised. The Commission paper identifies the key issues related to bee health. These include the need for an EU Reference Laboratory for bee diseases, measures to address biodiversity loss, further research and action to address bee mortality and better disease management, and a proposed increase in the EU contribution towards national beekeeping programmes of almost 25% for 2011-13.

The importance of insect pollination of agricultural plants to the UK economy has recently been valued at £400 Million per annum. This value excludes the intangible value and environmental importance of bees pollinating of wild plants throughout the UK. In the last 100 years, there has been a decline of 75% in the number of honey bee colonies in Britain, and similar declines throughout the EU, so it is easy to see why IBRA and others are so concerned that the honey bee is in decline.

### **Need for better disease control**

The Commission paper says that EU veterinary policy needs to be modified so that it can tackle bee mortality, for example, through effective measures to control bee pests such as the parasitic mite Varroa. In addition, access to medicines in the whole of the European Union should be improved through EU funding. One of the key issues for beekeepers in Britain today is that there are only limited treatments available to control Varroa. Products approved some 20 years ago are no longer effective because the mite has developed resistance to them. Some products approved to treat Varroa in mainland Europe are not available for UK beekeepers and it is hoped this issue can be resolved.

### **Independent research to inform the public**

The Commission paper says that research projects should deal with honey bee health and the decline of both wild and domesticated pollinators, including honey bee colonies in Europe. The Paper confirms that pesticides should be approved at the EU level only if they are safe for honey bees. Additional support could include existing EU research programmes such as the COLOSS (prevention of honey bee COLony LOSSes) Network. One of the UK representatives in the COLOSS Network is IBRA's Scientific Director Norman Carreck, who says that research is needed to better understand why and how honey bees have been in decline. The causes of bee decline seem to vary from country to country and, as yet, no common cause has been identified which means there may be no single panacea available to beekeepers. IBRA believes that this Communication will offers hope to beleaguered beekeepers and make steps to support bees and other pollinators throughout the EU, as their role in terms of agriculture and the environment is invaluable.

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## Notes for editors:-

1. The full European Commission paper is available at:-

[http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/liveanimals/bees/docs/honeybee\\_health\\_communication\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/liveanimals/bees/docs/honeybee_health_communication_en.pdf)

2. The International Bee Research Association ("IBRA") is the world's longest established apicultural research publishers and promotes the value of bees by providing information on bee science and beekeeping worldwide.

3. IBRA is a Registered Charity, and its Council of trustees boasts some of the world's leading bee scientists.

4. IBRA publishes the following peer reviewed scientific journals: -

4.1 The *Journal of Apicultural Research* was founded by IBRA in 1962. It includes original research articles, theoretical papers; scientific notes and comments; together with authoritative reviews on scientific aspects of the biology, ecology, natural history and culture of all types of bee.

4.2 The *Journal of ApiProduct and Apimedical Science* was launched by IBRA in 2009. It focuses upon evidence based research being carried out on biologically relevant properties of bee and hive products, and their scientific relevance in the fields of medicine, nutrition and healthcare. This journal provides a forum where the efficacy and effectiveness of bee and hive products with therapeutic properties can be presented, debated and evaluated using scientific principles.

5. IBRA publishes and sells books on bee science and beekeeping.

6. IBRA also provides bee information services.

7. Membership of IBRA costs just £30 annually. Membership benefits include receipt of four quarterly issues of *Bee World*, an accessible and topical journal on latest bee research, news, reviews and other relevant information for the bee scientist, beekeeper, and anyone with an interest in bees.

10. COLOSS is a network funded by the European Union COST Programme (Action FA0803) which aims to explain and prevent massive honey bee colony losses. The network does not directly support science but aims to coordinate national research activities across Europe and worldwide, promulgating consistent approaches and a broad transnational research programme with a strong focus on the transfer of science into beekeeping practice. COLOSS has 217 members drawn from 55 countries worldwide. It is chaired by Dr Peter Neumann of the Swiss Bee Research Centre, Liebefeld. Website <http://www.coloss.org/>

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

Norman Carreck, Scientific Director, IBRA +44 (0)791 8670169 Email: [norman.carreck@btinternet.com](mailto:norman.carreck@btinternet.com)

International Bee Research Association

Company limited by guarantee.

Registered in England and Wales. Reg. No. 463819

Registered Office: 16, North Road, Cardiff, CF10 3DY, UK.

Registered Charity No: 209222

Tel: +44 (0)29 2037 2409, Fax: +44 (0)5601 135640

Web-site: [www.ibra.org.uk](http://www.ibra.org.uk) Email: [mail@ibra.org.uk](mailto:mail@ibra.org.uk)