

Bee Better News

Pollinator Conservation, Sustainable Sourcing, and Bee Better Certification



Welcome to the first edition of the Bee Better Certified Newsletter.

In working to build and grow the world's first pollinator-focused food and farm certification, we are constantly immersed in the latest news, research, and events surrounding the role of bees and beneficial insects in our food system. This newsletter is a chance to share a snapshot of that world with you.

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POLLINATOR CONSERVATION NEWS:
Study highlights potential extinction risk to 40% of insect species in the next few decades

Confirming other recent media, an early 2019 research summary published in the

Journal *Biological Conservation* highlights the near-term extinction risk for huge numbers of insect species from habitat loss, pollution, and other factors.

Authors Francisco Sanchez-Bayo (University of Sydney) and Kris A.G. Wyckhuys (University of Queensland) conducted a systematic assessment of factors contributing to documented insect declines and found a dramatic reduction in insect numbers that could lead to the extinction of 40% of the world's insect species over the next few decades. Noting the significance of this finding, the authors write "The repercussions this will have for the planet's ecosystems are catastrophic to say the least, as insects are at the structural and functional base of many of the world's ecosystems since their rise almost 400 million years ago."

Among the various factors having the largest impact on insect losses, agriculture, including non-target impacts from pesticides, was one of the most significant. While the authors note that "unless we change our ways of producing food, insects as a whole will go down the path of extinction in a few decades," they also highlight well documented and easy to implement solutions such as enhancing field edges with wildflowers, the use of flowering cover crops, and the judicious use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) - including the reduction of insecticides that are not demonstrated to actually increase crop yields.

An abstract and link to the full article is available here:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0006320718313636>

RESEARCH BRIEF:

Surveys show consumers willing to pay more for "pollinator friendly" products

Consumers are willing to spend 14% more on blueberries and 8.4% more on cranberries marketed as "native bee pollinated" than traditionally marketed blueberries and cranberries, according to three recent studies.

To generate these results, researchers asked 484 American consumers about blueberries, and 804 about cranberries. These willingness-to-pay estimates are probably very conservative, according to Dr. Thomas Stevens, a Cornell educated Professor of Resource Economics at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Dr. Stevens was the lead author of the cranberry study, and a co-author on the blueberry study, both of which examined consumer's willingness-to-pay for bee friendly products.

Findings from a third study also indicate that certain demographics will place far greater value on bee friendly products than the general public. Heidi Wollaeger of Michigan State University Cooperative Extension and her co-authors surveyed over 3,000 Americans to understand the value that consumers place on "bee-friendly" labeled ornamental plants. Products marketed as grown using "bee-friendly" practices were valued significantly higher by respondents than products grown "neonicotinoid free," "using beneficial insects," or "using traditional insect management." Survey respondents were willing to pay up to \$2.10 more for "bee-friendly" plants over plants "grown using traditional insect management."

Perhaps most importantly, those who had purchased plants within the past year were willing to spend five times more for ornamental plants labeled as "bee-friendly" than survey respondents that had not purchased a plant in the last year.

In each study, the product attribute valued the highest by survey respondents was labeling indicating that products were grown in a bee-friendly manner. In all three studies survey respondents were representative of the general public, not of any particular consumer group. If bee friendly products are niche marketed to consumers who value those products the most, the price premium those products command could be significantly greater than the 8 to 14% price premium that the surveys suggest.

BEHIND THE LABEL:

A farm-side look at Bee Better Certified



AC Foods continues to establish pollinator habitat at additional farms, including this pollinator hedgerow being installed in California. Photo by Kitty Bolte / Xerces Society.

With more than 1000 acres of blueberry operations in Oregon's Willamette Valley, Halls Ferry and Humbug Farms - both part of the AC Foods family - are just two of a diverse array of farms applying for Bee Better Certified, the Xerces Society's flagship third-party verified farming certification that recognizes farms for meeting rigorous standards for pollinator stewardship.

Halls Ferry Farm (an Oregon Bee Project flagship farm) and Humbug Farm provide habitat on their farms by protecting and managing existing natural areas to provide season-long bloom for native pollinators such as bumble bees and mason bees, both excellent blueberry pollinators. Providing adequate resources for these wild bees helps ensure their year-to-year survival and their contribution as crop pollinators.

In addition to managing the farm for pollinator habitat, the farm teams at Halls Ferry and Humbug Farms have gone to substantial lengths on the farm to mitigate the impact of pesticides on beneficial insects and pollinators. With many of their blueberry blocks certified organic or transitioning to organic, they have already phased out several bee-toxic products at Halls Ferry and Humbug. However, organic certification does not automatically mean that every product used on a farm is safe for bees.

To help reduce non-target impacts, the pesticide program at Halls Ferry and Humbug has been designed to time the application of any bee-toxic pesticides when bees are

least likely to be in the crop (a requirement under Bee Better). This pesticide management system is supported by a rigorous scouting and monitoring program to measure pest pressure prior to deciding to spray - a management practice that is also a key Bee Better requirement. Moreover, older airblast pesticide sprayers have been phased out at these farms in favor of electrostatic sprayers to better target pesticide applications on problem areas. The electrostatic systems reduce both pesticide drift and the total amount of pesticides used.

With their certification paperwork submitted, AC Foods is already thinking about conservation at their other farms in California's heavily farmed Delta region, including a farm where they recently installed a 7000' long pollinator hedgerow.

Want to know more about Bee Better Certified? Check out the website for more information on the standards and the application process:

<https://beebettercertified.org/>

For more information on Bee Better Certified, visit beebettercertified.org or contact us directly:

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