

# Apimondia Statement on the Interactions Between Managed Honey Bees and Wild Pollinators

Pollinators are essential for plant reproduction, biodiversity, ecosystem functioning, and global food production. Globally, more than 20,000 bee species contribute to pollination, alongside many other insects such as flies, butterflies, and beetles. Approximately 75% of crops that produce vegetables, fruits, nuts, and seeds depend, at least in part, on pollinators. Declines in pollinator populations, therefore, pose significant risks to biodiversity, food security, and rural livelihoods.

Over recent decades, evidence has accumulated suggesting widespread declines in wild pollinator populations. Within this context, the role of the Western honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) in such declines has become central to public and scientific discussions. However, while localized competition for floral resources and pathogen transmission risks may arise, especially at high colony densities or when floral resources are limited, there is no evidence to support the view that managed honey bees are a primary cause of wild pollinator declines at large scales.

Research suggests that declines in wild pollinators are primarily linked to environmental pressures, including habitat loss and fragmentation, agricultural intensification and monocultures, pesticide exposure, climate change, and invasive species. These drivers affect both managed honey bees and wild pollinators alike; however, wild pollinators may be more vulnerable. The key difference lies in the fact that beekeepers actively monitor and manage honey bee populations, often compensating for losses, whereas wild pollinators lack comparable support systems.

Honey bees are both a managed and, in many regions, a wild-living species. In parts of Europe, Africa, and Western Asia, *Apis mellifera* is native and has coexisted with diverse pollinator communities for thousands of years. In other regions, including the Americas and Oceania, honey bees have been introduced and may behave as an invasive species. This diversity of ecological contexts highlights the need for regionally and locally specific understanding, management, and policies, always taking into account land-use configuration and the carrying capacity of a given ecosystem.

Increasing evidence indicates that the broader issue is the dominance of any single species within pollinator communities, rather than the identity of that species alone. High levels of dominance, whether by honey bees or any other pollinator species, are associated with reduced health and diversity of pollinator communities. This reinforces the importance of maintaining rich pollinator assemblages that, in turn, support diverse and healthy flora. In beekeeping, this implies managing healthy honey bee colonies and estimating appropriate colony numbers based on the carrying capacity of the environment. Biodiversity-friendly and good beekeeping practices are principles that Apimondia consistently promotes.

Apimondia calls for a science-based approach that recognizes the essential role of beekeeping in sustaining livelihoods and pollination services, while simultaneously safeguarding wild pollinator diversity. Effective solutions should prioritize habitat conservation and restoration, reduction of climate change impacts, increased floral resource availability, reduced pesticide risks, and robust monitoring of pollinator populations, alongside management practices that prevent excessive dominance by any single species. Such actions will benefit both managed and wild pollinators, including honey bees, and reinforce ongoing efforts to support pollinator health. Beekeepers already contribute by opposing the use of harmful pesticides and by maintaining flower-rich meadows, hedgerows, and flowering margins; these actions enhance resource availability and strengthen ecosystem resilience. Beekeeping, when responsibly managed, complements wild pollinators in supporting sustainable agriculture and resilient ecosystems, while also providing livelihood opportunities.

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