PP-053 [Bee Health]

An update on the colony loss report of the Apimondia 2023 Congress: Has Tropilaelaps passed the borders of Iran and is it among the causes of the massive devastating honey bee colony loss across Iran?

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At the previous Congress of Apimondia in Chile (2023), I reported a devastating massive colony loss of honey bees in apiaries across Iran with unidentified causes. The disastrous loss started four years ago throughout the country. The main symptoms have been dead larvae and/or pupae, perforated cappings and patchy brood pattern, causing an interruption of population growth and rapidly resulting in colony weakening or absconding with above 60% and in several cases even up to 100% losses. Back in 2023, I reported that against all logical expectations no valid national attempts in conducting a scientific analysis to identify the causes were made. That comment is still valid. Rather, regrettably without any accurate diagnosis a wide range of antibiotics (including for human consumption) were prescribed and applied extensively. During 2023 Apimondia Congress, in addition to several other hypotheses, a new one that Tropilaelaps mite could be one of the main causes of the loss was formed. Since then I personally have been officially demanding a nationwide collaboration on accurate scientific and comprehensive Tropilaelaps monitoring and also assessing other hypotheses. Through an incredible insisting, my official request in addition to the scientific elucidation of the significance of the demand, has reached to the uppermost level of the relevant decision makers of the country. However, sadly the important task has not yet been facilitated to initiate and meanwhile, the massive honey bee loss is still literally devastating the beekeeping industry and threatening the food security of the country. In fact, the consequence of the unidentified causes of the immense loss facing the inappropriate treatments has evolved the situation into much worse. Recently, I have been honored to receive the limited offer from the Health Commission of Apimondia and also WOAH for collaboration on identifying the causes of the loss by evaluating a few of the hypotheses. Although through this approach a comprehensive nationwide surveillance may not still occur, the results will definitely be nationally and internationally invaluable, as what has affected Iran could also reach the rest of the planet. The progress will be announced by the time of the 2025 Apimondia Congress.