



Ricola Foundation
Nature & Culture

COLOSS
Action FA0803



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Federal Department
of Economic Affairs FDEA
Agroscope Liebefeld-Posieux
Research Station ALP-Haras

COLOSS – Prevention of Honeybee Colony Losses

The research network COLOSS currently represents more than 300 academic and government researchers, veterinarians, beekeepers, officials and early stage researchers from 60 countries worldwide.

Tasked with improving honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) health and vitality at a global level, the network represents its members on the international stage, and organizes conferences, workshops, training schools, and Short-term Scientific Missions aimed at realising COLOSS's four primary objectives:

1. Development and maintenance of standards for monitoring and experimental honeybee research
2. Identification of underlying factors and mechanisms responsible for colony losses
3. Prevention of large-scale losses of colonies
4. Development of preventative and emergency measures, as well as sustainable management strategies

COLOSS welcomes the European Commission's communication to the European Parliament and the Council on honeybee health (COM(2010) 714 final).

Specifically, the network encourages the Commission's stance on:

- The importance of honeybees as pollinators, as well as honey, pollen, wax, and royal jelly producers, propolis collectors, and all-around improvers of human quality of life.
- The need to harmonise food safety standards for bee products affected by the 'cascade', as well as the need to promote efficient production and marketing of all honeybee products.
- Discussion at all levels (*i.e.*, international, EU, national, regional, local) and among all stakeholders on honeybee health issues (*i.e.* policy makers, officials, researchers, veterinarians, agricultural producers, beekeepers and the general public). Only with concerted, open dialogue and dissemination can we move forward towards developing and implementing efficient strategies for the sustainable maintenance of healthy honeybees and pollination in general in Europe and abroad.

- Support of both fundamental and applied honeybee research and research networks (e.g. FP7 pollinator health-related consortia and COST actions) that work towards the better understanding and prevention of the various health problems afflicting honeybees, including but not limited to pathogens, parasites, pests, genetic constraints, environmental contaminants, plant protection products, climate change, and socio-economic factors. Of primary concern are the parasitic mite *Varroa destructor*, mite-vectoring viruses, and the microsporidians *Nosema apis* and *Nosema ceranae*. Additionally, support for research on biodiversity is paramount, including habitat conservation, restoration, and sustainability that promotes a diversity of both managed and wild agricultural pollinators. These research endeavours are vital.
- Appropriate animal health certification for the movement of live bees among Member States, as well as for live imports from third countries to the EU, to prevent and control honeybee diseases. Establishment and maintenance of appropriate surveillance, inspection, and reporting infrastructure for honeybee colony health issues is vital for the accurate and timely identification, prevention, and mitigation of threats to honeybee colonies in Europe. Extreme vigilance for exotic threats to honeybees in Europe such as the small hive beetle *Aethina tumida* and *Tropilaelaps* mites must be preserved.
- Training on honeybee health for government officials, but also for veterinarians, researchers, beekeepers and other stakeholders (e.g. agricultural producers) working at the ground level
- Preventative rather than curative strategies, and the adoption of integrated pest management principles. Improved availability of veterinary medicines for honeybees is urgently needed, as is other non-chemical prevention and control measures.
- The importance of EU Reference Laboratories for animal health risk management, including the need for a specific bee health designate. This laboratory must work in collaboration with existing and future honeybee health research centres, consortia, and networks for all efforts to be efficient and avoid overlap.
- Thorough risk assessments for agricultural pesticides and genetically modified organisms to ensure honeybee and human safety. Pro-active measures must be organized, in addition to rapid, dynamic, responses to new scientific results or during unexpected events.

COLOSS is committed to supporting the European Commission's efforts to improve honeybee health at a both a European and global scale, thus helping to ensure sustainable agriculture and biodiversity for future generations. In collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, the network will continue to direct endeavours that seek to better

understanding the complex issue of honeybee colony losses and the maintenance of sustainable, healthy honeybees. This will be achieved primarily through activities that emphasise the standardisation of honeybee research methodologies (e.g. the COLOSS *BEEBOOK* and Colony Loss Questionnaire) and the coordination of pan-European pollinator health studies, to enable a coordinated, concerted effort at the EU level. For this to happen, COLOSS encourages open, transparent dialogue among all stakeholders, including the public.

Prepared by Geoff Williams & Peter Neumann (Swiss Bee Research Centre, Research Station Agroscope Liebefeld-Posieux ALP-HARAS, Bern, Switzerland), in consultation with the COLOSS Executive Committee, May 2012