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Memorandum

Date: November 26, 2014
To: Board
From: Henry Jennings
Subject: Overview of Federal Discussions on State Pollinator Protection Plans

Pollinator decline has emerged as a growing concern in recent years throughout the country and around the globe. As a result, federal agencies have focused significant resources toward researching the causes of pollinator decline and to developing policies designed to improve pollinator health and sustainability. On June 20, 2014, the President issued a memorandum directing numerous federal agencies to coordinate and focus additional resources on improving the health of pollinators and their habitat. As one component of the developing federal strategy, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has been promoting the concept of state-specific “Managed Pollinator Protection Plans.” A draft guidance document will be discussed by the EPA and the State FIFRA Issues Research and Evaluation Group (SFIREG) on December 8 and 9, 2014. The draft guidance document will be released to the public following that meeting.

Even though the guidance is not yet available for public consumption, a number of the principle components have been discussed at public meetings—including last week’s Pollinator Health and Safety Conference in South Portland—which allows states to publicly discuss those components in general terms. The following bullets represent my understanding of the proposed state-specific pollinator protection plan components:

- A robust public participation process that includes all stakeholders, especially beekeepers and pesticide applicators.
- A mechanism for beekeepers and pesticide applicators to effectively communicate about the location of bee hives and the timing and location of pesticide applications.
- A recognition that effective communication and protection of pollinators is shared a responsibility between pesticide applicators and beekeepers.
- A recognition on the part of EPA that many of the most important considerations around pollinator protection are regional in nature and that allowing states ample flexibility to address pollinator health will likely be more effective and best serve the public interest.

A handful of states have already developed pollinator protection plans so there are existing models we can use for guidance. EPA may eventually limit certain pesticide uses to states with pollinator protection plans via label statements, and it is suggesting that plans ideally be in place by 2015. Consequently, the staff sees potential benefits to all stakeholders in considering the concept sooner rather than later.