

Safeguarding Pollinators through Responsible Innovation, Biocontrol, and Policy Engagement

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Pollinators are essential for food security, biodiversity, and resilient ecosystems. Yet their decline is accelerating due to habitat loss, pesticides, invasive species, climate change, and emerging technological risks. Beekeepers and civil society call for a precautionary but innovation-friendly EU policy framework. Three pressing dossiers require attention: the regulation of New Genetic Techniques (NGTs), the integration of Biocontrol, and the organisation of the EU Pollinator Week.

Topic 1: New Genomic Techniques in Plant Breeding

The beekeeping community is deeply concerned by the Commission, Parliament and Council proposals on NGTs. While framed as modernisation, these texts risk undermining GMO-free agriculture, food safety, and consumer trust. Key issues include:

- **Risk assessment loopholes:** Exempting NGT-1 plants from safety tests contradicts the Cartagena Protocol and ECJ ruling. Even small DNA modifications can generate

traits toxic to pollinators. Risk assessments must remain mandatory.

- **Biodiversity at stake:** Limiting plant diversity through patents would further reduce nectar and pollen availability. Patent restrictions are essential to preserve genetic diversity for pollinators and farmers.
- **Labelling and traceability:** Freedom of choice requires mandatory labelling and traceability across the supply chain. Costs of proving GMO-free status must not be shifted onto beekeepers.
- **Food market uncertainty:** Beekeeping products risk reclassification as novel foods if bees forage on NGT plants, creating legal uncertainty.

Ask to MEPs: Uphold the precautionary principle in the dialogue, resist deregulation of NGTs, ensure mandatory risk assessment, traceability, and patent restrictions, and protect beekeepers from liability risks.

Topic 2: Towards a Favourable Framework for Biocontrol

Biocontrol—using natural organisms, substances, or mechanisms to manage pests—offers safer, low-risk alternatives to synthetic pesticides. It is central to Integrated Pest Management (IPM), the Farm to Fork Strategy, and the Biodiversity Strategy. Yet current regulation hampers its uptake.

- **Recognise biocontrol as distinct:** EU law should treat biocontrol separately from chemical pesticides, establishing a “biocontrol priority” within IPM.

- **Tailored risk assessment:** Current procedures designed for chemicals create unjustified barriers. Specific, proportionate protocols are needed.
- **Accelerated authorisation:** EU-level mechanisms and mutual recognition across Member States would remove duplication and speed access to market.
- **Support farmer adoption:** CAP, Horizon Europe, and national funding should prioritise training, demonstration, and incentives for farmers.
- **Monitoring and safeguards:** Conditional authorisations with transparent post-market surveillance can balance innovation with safety.

Ask to MEPs: Champion a science-based, precautionary but enabling framework for biocontrol, helping the EU meet pesticide reduction targets while protecting biodiversity and pollinators.

Topic 3: EU Pollinator Week – Call for Parliamentary Engagement

Since 2012, EU Pollinator Week has united policymakers, farmers, beekeepers, scientists, and citizens to promote action for pollinators across Europe. Although the 2025 edition, initially planned to take place in Brussels from **4–6 November**, will not be held, the themes and discussions originally proposed remain central to the ongoing policy dialogue:

- Evaluation of the EU Pollinators Initiative and CAP measures.
- Debates on pesticide regulation, NGTs, and biocontrol as future pathways.
- Evidence on invasive species, honey market integrity, and pollinator-friendly inputs.
- Engagement from youth, science, industry, and civil society.

Ask to MEPs: Actively participate as hosts and moderators. Your support in reserving rooms in the European Parliament is essential to ensure the continuation of this unique forum that bridges science, policy, and citizens.

Conclusion

Pollinator protection requires **responsible innovation, fair regulation, and democratic debate**. MEPs play a decisive role in:

1. Ensuring the EU's NGT regulation upholds the precautionary principle and pollinator safety.
2. Creating an enabling legal framework for biocontrol methods.
3. Hosting and engaging in the EU Pollinator Week to maintain momentum for pollinator-friendly policies.

By acting now, Parliament can safeguard biodiversity, support farmers and beekeepers, and secure food systems for future generations.