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Press Release

EU Commission, Parliament and Member States: Bees Need You to Secure a Place for a Pollinator Index to monitor the impact of Policies!

The future Common Agricultural Policy requires instruments to measure its impact on the environment and biodiversity. The CAP will be a concrete development of Europe's commitments established in the Biodiversity [1] and Farm2Fork [2] strategies to improve environmental conditions and transform the agricultural system into a sustainable one. Additionally, it will need to work in synergy with the EU Pollinators Initiative [3].

Pollinators are essential to achieve Europe's sustainability goals. They are also one of our greatest allies in monitoring environmental impact. **The European Commission, Parliament, and the Member States now have the opportunity to highlight the role of pollinators by securing the inclusion of a Pollinator Index in the legislative text of the CAP. Today (March 11, 2021), the 'trilogues' [3] on CAP resume with an opportunity to safeguard the role of pollinators in the future of the policy.**

Our message is clear: **We need a Pollinator Index to measure the impact of policies affecting the European landscape and environment. Therefore, the legislative text of the CAP needs to secure a place for the Pollinator Index.**

A Pollinator Index within the CAP is in the best interest of all involved parties. Through well-developed monitoring schemes based on the strength and status of pollinators, authorities will be able to better measure and adapt policies and instruments to persistent challenges in the field. Managed and wild bees and other pollinators can help guide decision-making both in the short and long term. A Pollinator Index provides much more insights than the number of beehives, a valuable but insufficient parameter to monitor environmental conditions. Instead, it will present a holistic picture of the status of pollinators considering both managed and wild pollinators.

The EU Pollinator Initiative already sets the disposition for DG Environment to build a Pollinator Index. While it is still under development by DG ENVI, participants in the trilogues need to ensure its future application by securing its place in the CAP today. The Pollinator Index and its methodology will be ready by the time the CAP enters into force. Other indicators can already be applied in the meantime, including but not limited to monitoring the species of butterflies following the Habitat Directive [4], as proposes DG AGRI, and Member States can follow the lessons learned from beekeeping programmes and the Insignia project [5] using honey bees as micro samples of the

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environment. The ongoing public investment and the benefits that will result from this tool to measure the impact of policies are too significant to dismiss.

In the meantime, there is an available and ongoing data collection for the following parameters that can already be used as indicators, in addition to butterfly monitoring [6]:

- Rate of winter and or summer of honey bee colony losses. One of the primary sources of data for this is already available through the COLOSS Honeybee Research Association [7]. In collaboration with the association, along with projects that target beehive monitoring, comprehensive information can be recovered [8] [9] [10] [11] [12].
- Amount of honey/pollen produced per km² (incl. productivity per colony).
- Using honey bees as environmental samplers for determination of botanical richness and pesticide exposure (e.g. see beekeeping programmes in Piamonte, Rôhnes-Alpes, among others and the Insignia project).
- The location and period of complaints that beekeepers or naturalists present to authorities, which only requires an institutional involvement for tracking and making the information available. The first-hand knowledge from fieldwork is valued and presents an indication that works in synergy with the other parameters.

There is an increasing need for accountability and to improve environmental conditions. It is not only in the best interest of decision-makers to better understand their legislation and policies' efficacy. Civil society is also demanding more transparency and better results. Convinced by the dissemination of scientific findings on the decline of environmental health and growing pollution, citizens are more and more preoccupied with the environment, biodiversity loss and the impact of unsustainable practices [13] [14]. The European Court of Auditors already denounced the significant shortcomings in pollinator protection in Europe [15]. A pivotal action to correct this situation is through improved monitoring, particularly within the CAP framework, which affects vast portions of the European landscape.

The Pollinator Index aims to serve as an objective tool to monitor the real performance of public policies and their impact on the environment. The Pollinator Index promises to allow for the calibration of public spending and improving public decisions that target or influence pollinators.

The European Commission, Member States, and the European Parliament have the future of bees in their hands. We request them to ensure a place for the Pollinator Index in the CAP and send a clear message of synergy and coherence amongst EU policies and objectives. Make pollinators your allies today!

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Note: In addition to this press release, you may consult important documents relating to the Pollinator Index in the link:

- A. Pollinator Index Factsheet - BeeLife's proposal (available in English, French, Romanian, Spanish and German): <http://bit.ly/FactsheetsBLIndex>
- B. An article detailing BeeLife's proposal for a Pollinator Index: <http://bit.ly/PollinatorIndexDoc>

References:

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[15] European Court of Auditors. 2020. Special Report 15/2020: Protection of wild pollinators in the EU—Commission initiatives have not borne fruit.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

BeeLife European Beekeeping Coordination is an NGO initially formed by professionals of the beekeeping sector from different countries of the European Union. BeeLife works for the protection of pollinators in Europe, highlighting their value for nature and people. With over 20 members (beekeeping and farming associations) from 11 different European countries, BeeLife links policy, science and field observations to promote a more sustainable future for pollinators and their role in ecosystems.