

Brussels, 7 April 2026

Dear Director General Ms Sandra GALLINA,

Cc: Ms Brigitte Missone (DG AGRI), National Competent Authorities, National Reference Laboratories for Bee Health, EU Reference Laboratory for Bee Health

Subject: Urgent preparedness and coordinated vigilance regarding the risk of introduction of *Tropilaelaps* spp. into the European Union

We are writing to highlight an imminent and scientifically substantiated risk to honeybee health: the *Tropilaelaps* mite. The current epidemiological and geopolitical situation in Eastern European countries requires immediate preparedness, reinforced vigilance, and coordinated action at both the EU and national levels.

For several years now, the *Tropilaelaps* mite has been spreading westwards across Asia. Due to its enormous reproductive rate, it can cause faster and more severe colony collapse than *Varroa destructor*¹, representing a major sanitary and economic threat to the EU beekeeping sector. This pest is classified as a notifiable animal disease under categories D and E in accordance with Commission Implementing Regulation 2018/1882 and the Animal Health Law (EU Regulation 2016/429).

The mite has been detected in bee colonies in Georgia² and in the Russian regions of Krasnodar and Rostov³ on the border with Ukraine. Populations are established there, leading to colony losses in beekeeping.

The European Reference Laboratory for Bee Health⁴ highlighted that the current geopolitical context limits surveillance capacity in Ukraine, preventing a reliable epidemiological assessment⁵. Furthermore, given the potential for informal bee trade between Georgia and Turkey, the Reference Laboratory considers the risk of introduction of *Tropilaelaps* into the EU to be "significant".

Scientific evidence demonstrates that *Tropilaelaps* can potentially be introduced through multiple pathways, including the movement of live bees (particularly queens and packages), used beekeeping equipment, and bee products⁶. Existing import and

¹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2214574517300810>

² <https://reference-global.com/article/10.2478/jas-2024-0010>

³ <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002188392400003X>

⁴ https://eurl-bee.anses.fr/en/minisite/abeilles/welcome-website-eu-rl-bee-health?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁵ https://sitesv2.anses.fr/en/system/files/Scientific_note_EURL_Geographical_distribution_Tropilaelaps_march_2025.pdf

⁶ <https://ojs.mtak.hu/index.php/Apis/article/view/21253>

surveillance frameworks may not be sufficiently robust to fully mitigate this multifactorial risk.

International precedents confirm this concern. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)⁷ suspended imports of bees and queens from Ukraine in 2024⁸ following a risk assessment aligned with the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) manual on import risk analysis for animals and animal products. Previously, in January 2024, the CFIA sent a questionnaire to the competent Ukrainian authority to gather up-to-date information on beekeeping and the status of *Tropilaelaps*. Based on the information received, the CFIA concluded that Ukraine is not guaranteed to be free of *Tropilaelaps*. Similarly, the United Kingdom Government introduced temporary import restrictions last year (on honeybees⁹, unprocessed apiculture by-products, used apiculture equipment and apiculture products in combs) due to insufficient guarantees of *Tropilaelaps*-free status¹⁰.

Requests for immediate and coordinated action

In light of the above, we respectfully call for the following measures:

At the EU level (DG SANTE):

BeeLife requests, as a matter of urgency, clarification of the sanitary status of Ukraine, Turkey, and neighbouring regions concerning *Tropilaelaps*.

Establish, in coordination with Member States, a preventive surveillance and control buffer zone (e.g., of at least 100 km) along the EU's eastern borders.

- Within this zone, implement systematic monitoring using modern molecular diagnostic tools¹¹, including the analysis of honey samples collected from beekeepers by official veterinarians.
- Such approaches allow for cost-effective, large-scale confirmation of absence or early detection of *Tropilaelaps*.
- In the event of a positive detection, existing EU legislation would enable the rapid activation of containment and eradication measures, if relevant.

Pending confirmation of disease-free status, adopt precautionary measures under Article 261 of Regulation (EU) 2016/429.

⁷ <https://inspection.canada.ca/>

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https://honeycouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/CFIA_ACIA-21275496-v2-Response_Letter_Bee_Imports_from_Ukraine_2024-_Stakeholders-PDF-Original-21256061.pdf

⁹

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/official-veterinary-surgeon-ovs-notes/6-october-2025-tropilaelaps-mite-restrictions-ukraine>

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/official-veterinary-surgeon-ovs-notes/6-october-2025-tropilaelaps-mite-restrictions-ukraine>

¹¹ <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/ecology-and-evolution/articles/10.3389/fevo.2024.1275995/full>

At the national level (Member States):

BeeLife and its members encourage the activation of a formal technical alert system for *Tropilaelaps* under national animal health frameworks, ensuring:

- Immediate awareness among veterinary services, inspectors, and beekeeping stakeholders. As a beekeeping sector, we are going to raise awareness about the situation among our members.
- Reinforced passive and active surveillance in border regions.
- Rapid reporting and diagnostic confirmation pathways.

We would also like to engage with National Reference Laboratories and competent authorities to:

- Review and update contingency and surveillance plans;
- Validate and deploy diagnostic protocols (including molecular detection methods);
- Ensure preparedness for rapid response scenarios.

Finally, we respectfully ask you to strengthen border controls and enforcement measures to detect possible illegal movements of bees and apicultural materials.

We underline that there are currently no veterinary medicinal products in the EU specifically authorised for *Tropilaelaps*. While some treatments used against *Varroa destructor* may show partial efficacy, their use raises concerns regarding residues, resistance development, and long-term sustainability. This further reinforces the need for prevention, early detection, and rapid response as primary strategies.

Conclusion

The current situation calls for immediate, coordinated, and precautionary action. The experience with previous invasive pests demonstrates that delayed response significantly increases economic, environmental, and sanitary impacts.

We remain at your disposal to support technical discussions and facilitate coordination with the beekeeping and scientific communities.

Yours sincerely,



Anna Ganapini

President of BeeLife