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Prospects and challenges for the EU apiculture sector**European Parliament resolution of 1 March 2018 on prospects and challenges for the EU apiculture sector (2017/2115(INI))**

(2019/C 129/05)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolution of 15 November 2011 on honeybee health and the challenges of the beekeeping sector ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council (8606/11 ADD 1 REV 1) on the Commission communication on honeybee health (COM(2010)0714),
 - having regard to the European week of bees and pollination — EU Bee Week — which has been held at the European Parliament since 2012,
 - having regard to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) report ‘Collecting and Sharing Data on Bee Health: Towards a European Bee Partnership’ of September 2017, which put into practice the European Bee Partnership,
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development and the opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (A8-0014/2018),
- A. whereas the beekeeping sector is an integral part of European agriculture representing over 620 000 beekeepers in the EU ⁽²⁾; whereas beekeeping is widely practiced as a hobby or for own consumption purposes, as well as being pursued professionally;
- B. whereas the economic value supplied by bees involves pollination and the production of honey, honey wax and other bee products, while wooden frames or beehives, as well as apitourism, are also of great importance;
- C. whereas the beekeeping sector is vital for the EU and contributes significantly to society, both economically with around EUR 14,2 billion per year, and environmentally by maintaining the ecological balance and biological diversity, as 84 % of plant species and 76 % of food production in Europe are dependent on pollination by wild and domestic bees;
- D. whereas bees and other pollinators provide pollination and thus ensure the reproduction of numerous cultivated and wild plants, ensuring food production and food security and preserving biodiversity free of charge in Europe and in the world; whereas the importance of pollination in the EU is not sufficiently recognised and is often taken for granted, while in the US, for example, a total of EUR 2 billion is spent each year on artificial pollination; whereas Europe is home to approximately 10 % of global bee diversity; whereas according to the French National Institute for Agricultural Research, the mortality of bees would cost EUR 150 billion worldwide, or 10 % of the market value of food, which attests to the need to protect pollinating insects;
- E. whereas recent research by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) shows that increasing the density and variety of pollinating insects has a direct impact on harvest yields and, as such, can help small-scale farmers increase their productivity by an average of 24 % overall;

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 153 E, 31.5.2013, p. 43.

⁽²⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/honey_en

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- F. whereas not all countries have a beekeeper and beehive registration system that would facilitate the monitoring of developments in the sector, the market and bee health;
- G. whereas in 2004 the Commission guaranteed EUR 32 million per year to national beekeeping programmes for the sole benefit of beekeeping, and whereas by 2016 this figure had risen to 36 million, but is still far from being enough (representing only 0,0003 % of the CAP budget);
- H. whereas between 2004 and 2016 the number of honey bee colonies rose by 47,8 % through the accession of new Member States, but EU funding increased by just 12 %, meaning that the available EU funding is not sufficient to maintain the bee population and appropriately assist beekeepers in renewing their bee colonies following population losses in Member States suffering high mortality rates;
- I. whereas despite this statistical increase, many professional beekeepers have ceased activity, and in some Member States the number of bee colonies has declined by as much as 50 % or more ⁽¹⁾, owing to the effects of climate change (e.g. spring frost, drought, fires), certain chemical active substances, and disturbances within the EU's internal market in honey; whereas numerous cases of winter losses and disorders continue to be recorded today;
- J. whereas national programmes for the apiculture sector in receipt of EU co-funding have an overall positive effect; whereas it is more likely to be the national implementation that can sometimes generate lack of confidence from the sector and therefore diminish uptake;
- K. whereas the apiculture sector suffers from a particularly serious demographic and ageing problem, with only a small percentage of beekeepers aged under 50, which jeopardises the future of the sector; whereas beekeeping represents a potential source of work and integration for young people in rural areas, since access to land is limited in many European regions;
- L. whereas good theoretical knowledge combined with practical training can help facilitate better understanding of and action to deal with the challenges ahead for bee colonies, and are therefore important; whereas beekeepers should operate in a responsible and professional way and in close cooperation with farmers in order to tackle future challenges such as climate change, natural disasters, reduction of bee foraging grounds, attacks by wild animals and from species of migratory birds in some regions (beehives are greatly exposed to such predations as beekeeping is often practised in the open air), and high administrative burdens in some Member States;
- M. whereas the National Apiculture Programmes co-funded by the EU provide participants with the opportunity to undertake research and development projects; whereas successful projects can substantially contribute to strengthening the sector and improving its capacity to resist natural and market crises; whereas knowledge transfer and the exchange of good and innovative practices provide added value to the European apiculture sector, in particular if complemented by a specific programme, such as the current 'Erasmus for beekeepers' under Pillar II of the CAP;
- N. whereas the practice of so-called nomadic farming has many positive aspects, but also a number of problematic ones, in particular regarding compliance with the rules to prevent hazardous situations from spreading; whereas, therefore, more careful monitoring needs to take place;
- O. whereas the currently observed increased mortality among honeybees and wild pollinators in Europe is worrying because of its negative impact on agriculture, biodiversity and ecosystems; whereas there are multiple stress factors causing increased bee mortality, which vary according to geographical area, local characteristics and climatic conditions; whereas these factors include the severe impact of invasive alien species such as *Varroa destructor*, the small hive beetle (*Aethina tumida*), the Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) and of American foulbrood, as well as animal pathogens such as noseiosis, the impact of some active substances in plant protection products and other biocides, climate change, environmental degradation, the degeneration of habitats and the progressive disappearance of flowering

⁽¹⁾ This leads to loss of productivity because beekeepers have to increase bee stocks to produce equivalent amounts of honey.

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plants; whereas bees are dependent on agricultural land, with surface areas and crop diversity supplying their main food source, and it would therefore be useful for both beekeepers and farmers to apply a certain type of ecological focus areas called 'beekeeping areas', which could subsequently be widely used in all Member States, in particular during the low-flowering season;

- P. whereas beekeepers are often powerless to combat bee diseases and parasites, owing to lack of information and training and of effective means to counteract them, such as access to bee treatment medicines; whereas beekeepers are receiving support for protective measures against *Varroa destructor*, although those measures are not yet fully successful as research and development efforts remain inadequate regarding treatments against parasitic species, the impact of bee diets and exposure to chemical products;
- Q. whereas the obligation of beekeepers to declare diseases and parasites leads to the systematic destruction of hives and might encourage them not to declare these; whereas the medicines available on the market to treat bee diseases are limited and do not match the increased need for effective veterinary medicines; whereas several natural substances have been tested for the control of varroosis, of which three have become the basis for organic treatments, namely formic acid, oxalic acid and thymol;
- R. whereas monoculture-based farming using crop varieties and hybrids with lower nectar and pollen yields and shorter flowering periods greatly reduces both biodiversity and the extent of the areas used for bee foraging grounds; whereas British scientists have recently concluded that local and regional breeds of bees survive better in a given area than breeds of honey bees settled from elsewhere⁽¹⁾; whereas the long-term health and sustainability of the apiculture sector in Europe rests on ensuring the long-term health and sustainability of local honey bee ecotypes, given their diversity and ability to adapt to local environments;
- S. whereas the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), in its report adopted on 26 February 2016, as well as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in its Worldwide Integrated Assessments on systemic insecticides, have warned against the decline in pollinators; whereas bees are an important indicator of environment quality;
- T. whereas beekeepers, farmers, environmentalists and citizens expect actions based on clear scientific consensus on all causes of bee mortality, including the effects of pesticide active substances (e.g. some neonicotinoids and some other systemic insecticides), as identified by EFSA;
- U. whereas the variation in scientific findings can be partially ascribed to the use of different analytical methods and research protocols; whereas lack of coordination of research into pollinators at EU level and of accessible and harmonised data between stakeholders are resulting in a proliferation of divergent or contradictory studies;
- V. whereas it is important to maintain and deepen dialogue and cooperation among all stakeholders (beekeepers, farmers, scientists, NGOs, local authorities, plant protection industries, the private sector, veterinarians and the general public), to coordinate research and to share all relevant collected data in a timely fashion;
- W. whereas there is a general demand for a common and harmonised database, including inter alia type of crop and agricultural practice, presence of pests and diseases, climate and weather conditions, landscape and infrastructure, density of bee colonies and the bee mortality rate per region, as well as for relevant digital tools and technologies that are harmless to bees, and media as suggested by the 'European Bee Partnership' initiative adopted in June 2017; whereas the results of the EFSA comprehensive scientific review, already delayed for more than one year, are needed to enable decisions to be made based on the most recent science; whereas clear results on all indicators of bee health are

⁽¹⁾ 'Honey bee genotypes and the environment', in Journal of Agricultural Research 53(2), pp. 183-187 (2014)

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needed as soon as possible in order to stop and reduce the mortality of bees, in particular through field tests; whereas beekeepers, farmers and citizens expect the Commission to closely monitor, together with relevant EU agencies and experts from the Member States, the EFSA Guidance for assessing the impact of plant protection products on bees, and expect Member States to duly implement it;

- X. whereas honey production is also affected by weather conditions, as warm and moist weather promotes honey production, while simultaneous cold and wet weather impedes it; whereas autumn and winter losses contribute to bee colony thinning and to a decline in honey production, which can reach 50 % in some Member States, and even 100 % in some regions;
- Y. whereas attention should be paid to the varying size of the honeybee population in different agricultural areas, given that it is growing in some honey-producing countries and declining in others;
- Z. whereas the increase in bee mortality has forced beekeepers to buy new colonies more regularly, resulting in increased production costs; whereas the cost of a bee colony has increased at least fourfold since 2002; whereas replacing a bee colony can often lead to a decrease in production in the short and medium term, since new colonies are less productive when first established; whereas beekeepers never use as many bee colonies in honey production as the statistics show, since they rebuild the original number of colonies in the course of the year, at the expense of production quantity since the restocking of lost colonies also requires honey;
- AA. whereas there has been a twofold increase in the amount of honey produced and exported in some third countries over the past 15 years; whereas the EU is barely 60 % self-sufficient in honey — a figure which is not increasing — while the number of hives in the EU nearly doubled between 2003 and 2016 and the number of beekeepers increased from around 470 000 to around 620 000 during the same period; whereas in 2016 the three leading European producers of honey were Romania, Spain and Hungary, followed by Germany, Italy and Greece;
- AB. whereas every year the EU imports about 40 % of its honey; whereas in 2015 imported honey was on average 2,3 times cheaper than the honey produced in the EU; whereas the EU imports around 200 000 tonnes of honey per year, mainly from China, Ukraine, Argentina and Mexico, which is creating a serious competitive disadvantage for Europe's beekeepers compared to producers from third countries and preventing a higher degree of self-sufficiency; whereas imported honey often does not meet the standards applied to EU beekeepers;
- AC. whereas consumers often think they are eating honey from the EU, when a proportion of that honey in fact is a blend of EU and third-country honey, while a large proportion of imported honey is adulterated;
- AD. whereas since 2002 the amount of honey from the world's major honey-producing regions has stagnated or decreased as a result of poor bee health, while the amount of honey produced in China has doubled (to around 450 000 tonnes per year from 2012), representing more than the combined honey production of the EU, Argentina, Mexico, the US and Canada;
- AE. whereas in 2015 more than half of the EU's imported honey came from China — around 100 000 tonnes, double the amount in 2002 — even though the number of bee colonies has declined in other parts of the world; whereas according to beekeepers' associations and professionals a large proportion of imported honey from China might be adulterated with exogenous cane or maize sugar; whereas not all Member States are able to carry out analyses to detect irregularities in imported honey at EU external border control posts;
- AF. whereas honey is the third most adulterated product in the world; whereas adulteration does considerable harm to Europe's beekeepers and exposes consumers to serious health risks;

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- AG. whereas according to experts, the 2002 chloramphenicol problem was resolved by companies exporting honey from China not by complying with the rules but by using resin filters;
- AH. whereas at its meeting in December 2015 the Agriculture and Fisheries Council discussed quality concerns regarding honey imports and the competitiveness of the European apiculture sector; whereas following on from this the Commission ordered the centralised testing of honey;
- AI. whereas Member States' honey samples were tested by the Joint Research Centre, which found, among other things, that 20 % of the samples taken at the EU's external borders and on importers' premises did not respect the honey composition and/or honey production processes laid down in the Honey Directive (2001/110/EC), and 14 % of the samples contained added sugar; whereas in spite of this, fake and adulterated honey continues to enter Europe;
- AJ. whereas according to the Codex Alimentarius, which is used in the EU, honey is a natural product to which no substance may be added and from which none may be extracted, and which should not be dried outside the hive;
- AK. whereas the imbalance in the European honey market resulting from the wholesale importation of adulterated low-cost honey has reduced the purchase price of honey in the EU's main producer countries (Romania, Spain, Hungary, Bulgaria, Portugal, France, Italy, Greece and Croatia) by half between 2014 and 2016, and this continues to put European beekeepers in a difficult and detrimental position;
- AL. whereas the second paragraph of point (a) of Article 2(4) of the Honey Directive as amended by Directive 2014/63/EU provides that, where honey originates from more than one Member State or third country, the mandatory indication of the countries of origin may be replaced by one of the following, as appropriate: 'blend of EU honeys', 'blend of non-EU honeys' or 'blend of EU and non-EU honeys'; whereas the indication 'blend of EU and non-EU honeys' is not informative enough for the consumer;
- AM. whereas many honey packagers and traders now abuse this way of indicating origin in order to conceal the real country of origin, as well as the proportion of honey from the different countries concerned, as purchasers are becoming more knowledgeable and are distrustful of foodstuffs from certain countries; whereas many large honey producer countries such as the US, Canada, Argentina or Mexico have much stricter requirements on honey labelling than the EU's simplified rules, and therefore offer much better guarantees than the EU as regards providing consumers with the necessary information;
- AN. whereas current rules do not take account of fraudulent practices affecting processed products such as biscuits, breakfast cereals, confectionery, etc; whereas the label 'honey' can mislead consumers in regard to the real content of the given product, as it is often used when much less than 50 % of the sugar content of the product originates from honey;
- AO. whereas the 'European Honey Breakfast' initiative launched in 2014 was a great success, and this excellent initiative is open to all Member States, the aim being to contribute to the education of children as regards eating healthy food such as honey and to promote the apiculture sector; whereas on 11 May 2015 Slovenia initiated, at the meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council, the official recognition of 20 May as the World Bee Day to be declared by the UN, which idea was widely supported by all Member States and was endorsed by the FAO at its July 2017 Rome Conference; whereas it was agreed there that particular attention should be paid to the apiculture sector in terms of agriculture, plant protection and sustainable farming, as bees have a large impact on the ecological balance worldwide;
- AP. whereas the EU school fruit, vegetables and milk scheme programmes represent a critical tool to reconnect children with agriculture and the variety of EU agricultural products, particularly those produced in their region; whereas in addition to promoting fresh fruit and vegetables and drinking milk, these programmes allow Member States to include other local, regional or national specialties such as honey;

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- AQ. whereas, although getting local producers involved in the programmes under the EU's 'School fruit, vegetables and milk scheme' means an additional administrative and financial burden, the potential benefits in terms of strengthening awareness of the nutritional benefits of honey, the importance of apiculture, encouragement to increase consumption and the smooth involvement of mainly local beekeepers, could be positive for the sector and the honey chain overall; whereas local producers experience difficulties in participating in the programmes under the EU school scheme due to restrictive application of the legislation on the direct supply of small quantities of honey in some Member States; whereas it is essential to promote local production and consumption;
- AR. whereas annual honey consumption varies hugely across the Member States: while Member States in Western Europe have an average consumption of 2,5-2,7 kg per person, the figure for the Member States which joined the EU from 2004 onwards is as low as 0,7 kg in some cases; whereas the European quality schemes and particularly the geographical indication (GI) schemes are of great importance for the preservation and creation of jobs; whereas more than 30 GIs for honey have been registered so far; whereas the labels 'European' and 'made in Europe' are often associated with high-value products;
- AS. whereas honey has a positive physiological impact, particularly in terms of health, given its antiseptic, anti-inflammatory and healing properties, which could be further recognised in the future agricultural policy;
- AT. whereas numerous examples of self-organisation and direct sale from the beekeeper are showing that the sale of honey, particularly organic honey, and other beekeeping products with short supply chains and at local producers' markets is hugely successful;
- AU. whereas urban beekeeping has gained in popularity in recent years and has the potential to increase awareness among a broader circle of citizens, including children, of the nature and benefits of beekeeping; whereas the planting of flowering plants in gardens and urban areas by the public and/or local and regional authorities also helps to enrich pollinator dietary sources;
- AV. whereas other beekeeping products such as pollen, propolis, beeswax, bee venom and royal jelly contribute significantly to citizens' wellbeing and are used as high-quality foods and sought as part of a natural way of life; whereas they also play a key role in the healthcare and cosmetics industries, and therefore constitute an additional resource for improving the economic situation of beekeepers; whereas, however, these products are not defined in the Honey Directive, and this omission works against implementing an effective sectoral policy and impedes quality-based approaches and the fight against fraud and adulteration; whereas any Member State can decide to ban GMO cultivation on its territory in order to protect European consumers from honey contaminated by GM pollen;
- AW. whereas large quantities of honey are imported into the EU and this in many cases causes serious disturbances and even crises on the EU honey market, contributing to weakening the European beekeeping sector; whereas the apiculture sector deserves to be treated as a priority in the EU in negotiations for free trade agreements, and honey and other bee products should be classified as 'sensitive products';

The significance of beekeeping

1. Underlines that honey bees, alongside wild bees and other pollinators, perform fundamental ecosystem and agriculture services by pollinating flowers, including crops, without which European agriculture, and in particular the cultivation of entomophilous plants (plants pollinated by insects), would not exist; underlines in this regard the importance of the CAP oriented towards sustainable development and the strengthening of biodiversity, which is better not only for bees' continuous existence and repopulation, but also for crop yields;
2. Calls on the Commission to ensure the prominence of beekeeping in future agricultural policy proposals, in terms of support and simplification, research and innovation, and beekeeping education programmes;

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3. Underlines that while the EU can take further action for beekeepers and bees, it is necessary to acknowledge the contribution of the current CAP in supporting beekeeping and also potentially improving the environment and biodiversity through various tools, such as crop diversification measures, ecological focus areas (EFAs), Natura 2000, organic farming, other agri-environmental measures which help to establish bee colonies, climate protection measures or the European Innovation Partnership;

EU support to beekeepers

4. Underlines that the financing of beekeeping for food production and therapeutic purposes must be structured in a more targeted and effective way, and appropriately increased in a future agricultural policy (expected from 2021);

5. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to provide support for the EU apiculture sector via strong policy tools and appropriate funding measures corresponding to the current bee stock; proposes, therefore, a 50 % increase in the EU budget line earmarked for national beekeeping programmes, reflecting the current honey bee population in the EU and the importance of the sector overall; strongly encourages each Member State, pursuant to Article 55 of Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 on the Single CMO, to develop a national programme for its beekeeping sector;

6. Calls on the Commission to thoroughly consider the inclusion of a new support scheme for beekeepers for the CAP post-2020, in order to adequately reflect the ecological role of bees as pollinators; underlines in this regard that the specific needs of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, including those who pursue their activities in outermost and mountainous regions and on islands, must be taken into account; calls on the Commission, furthermore, to investigate additional measures, such as support for purchasing comb foundations;

7. Calls on beekeepers to engage in an active dialogue with the competent authorities with a view to the more effective application of national apiculture programmes, the aim being to improve them and correct any problems that may occur;

Risk management

8. Calls on the Commission to launch a study on the feasibility of a beekeeping risk management scheme as part of national beekeeping programmes, in order to deal with loss of production suffered by professional beekeepers; suggests, therefore, an allowance calculated in accordance with the average turnover of the businesses affected; underlines that in several Member States insurance companies refuse to insure bee colonies and that beekeepers have difficulties in accessing the risk management tools under Pillar II of the CAP; calls, therefore, on the Commission and the Member States to facilitate the access of beekeepers to risk management tools;

EU co-funded National Beekeeping Programmes

9. Emphasises the need for appropriate training in beekeeping, and encourages Member States to include this as a prerequisite in the national programmes; believes that expenditure on the purchase of beekeeping equipment, where it is eligible and cofinanced under the individual national beekeeping programmes, should be recognised over the entire three-year programming period, and not just in the programme year in which the expenditure was incurred;

10. Calls on the Member States to consider introducing a compensation scheme in their national beekeeping programmes for bee colony mortalities resulting from natural disasters, diseases or predations;

11. Calls on the Commission to propose a change to the timing of the programme year, for the purposes of the national beekeeping programmes, whereby the year-end would be extended to 30 October, bearing in mind that under the regulation currently in force the programme year ends on 31 July, a date which falls during the height of the beekeeping season in some Member States, making it an unsuitable point in time;

12. Points out that the spread of brown bears and other predatory animals in some regions in Europe is posing new challenges for beekeepers concerning their personal safety and economic activities, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop appropriate ways of addressing this, in particular through compensation for damage caused;

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Research, training and education

13. Suggests broadening and sharing beekeeping research topics and findings also along the lines of the Apitherapy project consortium — particularly where financed by the EU — among Member States in order to avoid duplication; asks in this regard for the setting-up of a common digital database, harmonised at EU level, for the exchange of information among beekeepers, researchers and all parties involved; calls on the Commission, therefore, to promote and boost European beekeeping research projects, such as EFSA's research programme under the project 'Collecting and Sharing Data on Bee Health: towards a European Bee Partnership'; considers that greater private and public investment in technical and scientific know-how is essential and should be incentivised, at national and EU level, in particular on genetic and veterinary aspects and the development of innovative bee health medicines; supports the activity of EU reference institutes and laboratories, which results in improved research coordination, inter alia for purposes of investigating further the causes of bee mortality;

14. Calls on the Member States to ensure appropriate basic and vocational training programmes for beekeepers; highlights that beyond the agricultural and other economic aspects of apiculture the teaching material should contain knowledge related to pollination and other environmental practices, such as maintaining the ecological balance and preserving biodiversity, and improving the survival conditions for pollinators in farmed landscapes; believes that specific training modules on these issues should also be developed together with beekeepers for agriculture producers engaged in the cultivation of land; calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote greater cooperation and the sharing of knowledge and information, including advanced and mutual early warning systems between farmers and beekeepers, foresters, scientists and veterinarians on spraying periods and other insecticide application, prevention and control of diseases, technologies that are not harmful for bees, and plant protection methods that minimise pollinator mortality;

15. Calls on the Commission to adopt recommendations in order to support different national high-quality basic and vocational beekeeping education programmes in the EU; calls for programmes to encourage young people to enter the beekeeping profession, given the pressing need for generational renewal in the sector; considers it necessary to further develop the potential of the beekeeping sector in ways that are tailored to the needs of all beekeepers; also calls on the Commission to work with Member States and the sector to develop a code of best practice in beekeeping, supported via access at Member State level to high-quality training; with regard to professional education, encourages faculties of veterinary medicine in universities to strengthen the areas of veterinary oversight and engagement; considers that programmes such as Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+ should nurture research and training in the field of apitherapy;

Bee health and environmental aspects

16. Reiterates concerns that increased mortality and the decline in honeybees and wild pollinators, including wild bees, in Europe will have a profound negative impact on agriculture, food production and security, biodiversity, environmental sustainability and ecosystems;

17. Highlights the need for the EU and its Member States to take the necessary and immediate steps required to implement a large-scale and long-term strategy for bee health and repopulation in order to preserve the currently declining wild bee stock in the EU, also via agri-environmental measures to support the establishment of bee colonies;

18. Stresses the importance of biodiversity for the health and wellbeing of bees, providing them with foraging grounds and natural and semi-natural habitats along with extensive permanent pastures; draws attention to the gradual disappearance of valuable bee fodder plants — such as cornflowers, vetches, thistles or white clover — caused by the inappropriate use of plant protection products, the decrease in the use of grassland for grazing and the increase in its use for hay production; points out that this results in a lack of pollen and thus causes malnutrition in bees, which contributes to the decline in bees' health and their increased susceptibility to pathogens and parasites; stresses the need for protection of wild flowers and insect-friendly species across Europe; recalls that 'beekeeping areas' with a weighting factor of 1,5 are a type of EFA within the greening of the CAP; calls on the Commission, seed breeders and farmers to promote quality plant breeding schemes with high and proven melliferous or polliniferous capacity in the selection criteria, with preference for a maximum biological diversity of locally-adapted and locally-sourced species and varieties;

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19. Points to the need for appropriate financial incentives for organic beekeepers, given the additional requirements that they have to meet and the growing impacts stemming from the environment;

20. Underlines the need to preserve the extraordinary genetic heritage, diversity and capacity for adaptation of local, endemic honeybee populations, each tailored over generations to the particularities of their local environment, recalling that this diversity is important in the fight against invasive species, including parasites and diseases;

21. Notes that monoculture-based farming reduces biodiversity and poses a risk of insufficient pollination and the disappearance of melliferous flora, and calls on the Member States to develop strategies for sowing nectiferous plants on unused land; underlines in this regard that the preservation of abiotic resources, in particular soil and water, as well as substantial diversity of pollen and a wide variety of nourishment, are essential for the protection of bees;

22. Calls, therefore, on the Commission and the Member States to provide the necessary incentives to encourage locally-developed practices, in order to preserve honey bee ecotypes and cultivation throughout the EU;

23. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to put in place measures to increase legal protection and financial support for local honey bee ecotypes and populations throughout the EU, including by means of legally protected locally endemic honeybee conservation areas;

24. Calls on the Commission to draw up an inventory to evaluate the existing and emerging health risks at EU and international level, with the aim of establishing an action plan to combat bee mortality;

25. Urges the Commission to progress in implementing the pilot projects on bees and other pollinators as indicators of environmental and habitat health, as these might prove useful for the development of future policy;

26. Calls on the Commission to ensure that farm subsidies from the various CAP budget lines take account of bee-friendly practices, for example establishing EFAs or growing wild flowers favoured by bees on fallow land;

27. Stresses the need to apply the precautionary principle in order to protect pollinators in general, both domestic and wild;

28. Notes that a healthy bee is better placed to withstand parasitism, disease and predation; understands that some invasive alien species such as *Varroa destructor*, the small hive beetle (*Aethina tumida*), the Asian hornet (a species that is extremely aggressive towards other insects), as well as American foulbrood and certain pathogens such as nosemosis, are major causes of bee mortality and cause serious economic harm to beekeepers; reaffirms its support for the pilot project launched by Parliament on the breeding and selection programme for research into *Varroa* resistance; calls on the Commission and the Member States to support EU-wide applied research through effective breeding programmes producing bee species resilient to invasive species and diseases and possessing the behavioural trait of varroa-sensitive hygiene (VSH); in view of the risk that some invasive alien species such as *Varroa destructor* are able to develop resistance to some veterinary medicinal products (VMPs), encourages the Member States to perform annual tests on the level of mites' resistance to the different active substances used in the VMPs; proposes to maintain the compulsory fight against *Varroa* at EU level;

29. Calls on the Commission to involve all relevant drug producers in research into bee drugs, inter alia in order to combat *Varroa destructor* and avoid negative side-effects on bees' immune systems from these drugs, and to set up a common IT platform in order to share best solutions and drugs with interested parties, improve the availability of veterinary products vital to beekeeping, strengthen the role of veterinarians in managing bee health, and make beekeepers aware of all available solutions; calls for public and private research into biological and physical alternative methods that are innocuous to

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human and animal health, as well as the use of natural substances and compounds for control of varroosis, taking account of the specific advantages of organic treatments;

30. Acknowledges that the results of the monitoring exercises to assess the bee health situation carried out by some Member States are important and should be shared with the other Member States and with the Commission;

31. Calls on the Member States and the regions to use all means possible to protect local and regional honeybee species (strains of *Apis Mellifera* bees) from the undesirable spread of naturalised or invasive alien species having a direct or indirect impact on pollinators; supports the repopulation of hives lost through invasive alien species with bees of local native species; recommends Member States to create centres devoted to the breeding and safeguarding of native bee species; underlines in this regard the importance of developing breeding strategies to increase the frequencies of valuable traits in local honeybee populations; notes the possibilities provided for under Regulation (EU) No 1143/2014 on Invasive Alien Species, as well as potentially under the recently adopted Animal and Plant Health regulations (Regulations (EU) 2016/429 and (EU) 2016/2031 respectively); expresses its concern that contaminated bee wax imported from China can often cause health issues for bees;

32. Calls for a considered procedure to expand the list of invasive plant species that could lead to a reduction in the diversity of bee pastures in the EU;

Chemicals harmful to bees

33. Asks the Commission to suspend the authorisation of those pesticide active substances which endanger bee health on the basis of EFSA's scientific findings based on field tests, until the publication of EFSA's final detailed impact assessment; reiterates that any decision-making process must be based on scientific assessment and findings;

34. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to act on the established scientific consensus and ban those pesticide active substances, including those neonicotinoids and those systemic insecticides which are scientifically proven (on the basis of the findings of laboratory analyses and, especially, field tests) to be dangerous to bee health; calls at the same time for safe alternative products or agronomic methods (e.g. various effective forms of low-pesticide input pest management, biological control and integrated pest management) to be implemented to replace those active substances which pose a risk to bees;

35. Calls on the Commission to closely monitor, together with the relevant EU agencies and Member State experts, the EFSA Guidance for assessing the impact of plant protection products on bees, and calls on the Member States to implement it;

36. Underlines that any product which contains substances confirmed to be harmful to bees in agricultural use should be labelled as 'harmful to bees';

37. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to immediately increase scientific research, with a clearly determined schedule, into all substances likely to endanger bee health;

38. Stresses that the long-term effects of systemic plant protection products are underestimated; welcomes the recent adoption of a pilot project for the environmental monitoring of pesticide use through honey bees;

39. Recognises that bees' resistance is considerably weakened by cumulative chemical exposure, which leaves them unable to deal with stressors such as wet years, lack of nectar, diseases or parasites, according to independent, peer-reviewed scientific evidence;

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40. Recalls Directive 2009/128/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 establishing a framework for Community action to achieve the sustainable use of pesticides, and in particular its Article 14, which makes it mandatory for all farmers to apply the general principles of integrated pest management on their farms from 2014, and Article 9, which lays down a general ban on aerial spraying;

41. Points out that the EU has introduced temporary restrictions on the use of four neonicotinoid insecticides (clothianidin, thiamethoxam, imidacloprid and fipronil) in order to mitigate the impact on bees;

Combating honey adulteration

42. Expects the Member States and the Commission to guarantee full compliance of imported honey and other bee products with high-quality EU standards, thus combating both honey producers in non-EU countries who use dishonest methods and EU packagers and traders who wilfully mix adulterated, imported honey with EU honey;

43. Calls on the Commission to develop effective laboratory analysis procedures, such as nuclear magnetic resonance testing, detecting bee-specific peptides and other bee-specific markers, in order to detect instances of honey adulteration, and calls on the Member States to impose harsher penalties on offenders; invites the Commission to include private internationally recognised laboratories, such as the French EUROFINs or the German QSI, to carry out the most sophisticated examinations; calls on the Commission to develop an official database for honey, categorising honey of different origins using a common method of analysis;

44. Notes that honey packaging plants, which blend or process honey from multiple producers, are subject to EU food safety monitoring as laid down in Regulation (EC) No 853/2004; believes that this should be extended to all plants processing imported honey; specifies the need to avoid creating any financial or administrative burden for EU beekeepers who pack their own honey;

45. Stresses that the suggested measures would strengthen the EU monitoring applied to honey packagers in non-EU countries, thereby enabling the official auditors to find out if adulterated honey has been used and ensuring its removal from the food chain;

46. Believes that honey should always be identifiable along the food supply chain and should be classifiable according to its plant origin, irrespective of whether it is a domestic or an imported product, except in cases of direct transactions between producer and consumer; calls in this respect for the tightening-up of the traceability requirement for honey; believes that companies importing foreign honey, as well as retailers, should conform to EU rules and should only sell beekeeping products that satisfy the definition of honey as set out in the Codex Alimentarius;

47. Requests that the Commission amend the Honey Directive with a view to provide clear definitions and setting out the main distinctive characteristics of all apiculture products, such as monofloral and multifloral honey, propolis, royal jelly, beeswax, pollen pellets, beebread and bee venom, as already called for in texts adopted by Parliament;

48. Calls on the Commission to thoroughly examine the functioning of the EU market in bee feeds, supplements and medicines, and to take the necessary measures to streamline the market and prevent adulteration and illegal trading in those products;

49. Calls on the Commission to lay down NAL (no-action level) protocols, reference points for action (RPAs), or maximum residue limits (MRLs) for honey and other beekeeping products, in order to cover substances that cannot be authorised for the EU beekeeping sector, and to harmonise border veterinary inspections and internal market checks, bearing in mind that as far as honey is concerned, low-quality imports, adulteration, and substitutes distort the market and are continuing to exert pressure on prices and, ultimately, product quality within the internal market, and that there has to be a level playing field for products and producers from both the EU and third countries;

50. Is aware of the practical significance of having an early warning system for food and feed, and therefore calls on the Commission always to place instances of honey which is clearly fake on the RASFF (Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed) list;

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51. Calls on the Commission to ban the distribution of resin-filtered honey as soon as possible, since such honey contains nothing whatsoever of biological value;
52. Calls for continuous checks to be carried out on the quality of honey imported from third countries whose legislation permits the treatment of bee colonies with antibiotics;
53. Calls on the Commission to draw up manufacturing standards for comb foundations, which should include the respective permitted proportions of paraffin, foulbrood spores, and acaricide residues, with the provision that the acaricide residue content of wax to be made into foundations must not be such that residues could start passing into the honey;
54. Calls on the Commission to thoroughly test the large-scale import of honey from China in line with Regulation (EU) 2016/1036, and particularly to probe the operations of companies exporting honey from China and to evaluate the quality, proportion of quantity and sale price level of the honey on the EU honey market;
55. Considers that, in the light of the large quantities of honey that are imported from China, a trend which has accelerated in the last 15 years, the buying-in price of honey under real production costs in the EU and the bad quality of 'manufactured' (rather than produced) imported honey should make it clear to the Commission that it is time to start investigating the practices of some Chinese exporters, in order possibly to initiate anti-dumping proceedings;
56. Calls on the Commission to require official batch-sampling and testing of honey from non-EU countries at the EU's external borders, in line with Regulation (EU) 2017/625 (the former Regulation (EC) No 882/2004);
57. Notes that the Honey Directive as amended by Directive 2014/63/EU stipulates that the country in which the honey has been harvested must be indicated on the label where the honey originates in a single Member State or third country; acknowledges, however, that further action is required to tackle fraud in the field of bee products and to address the unfair competition represented by adulterated 'honey';
58. Reminds the Commission that consumers have the right to know the place of origin of all foodstuffs; considers, however, that labelling such as 'blend of EU honeys', 'blend of non-EU honeys', and especially 'blend of EU and non-EU honeys', completely conceals the origin of the honey from the consumer and consequently fails to fulfil the principles of EU consumer protection law; calls on the Commission, therefore, to ensure the accurate and mandatory labelling of honey and bee products, as well as greater harmonisation for honey production, in line with the legislation on quality schemes for agriculture products, in order to prevent consumers from being misled and facilitate the detection of fraud; recognises the success of direct sales of honey, which eliminate part of the problem as regards labelling of origin;
59. Asks for the 'blend of EU and non-EU honeys' descriptor on labels to be replaced by an indication of exactly which country or countries the honey used in the final product come from, and that these be listed in the order which corresponds to the percentage proportions used in the final product (additionally stating the percentage by country in a given product);
60. Asks the Commission to amend the Honey Directive with regard to the use of the word 'honey' or the terms 'containing honey' or 'made with honey' in the designation of processed products, or in any graphic or non-graphic element indicating that the product contains honey, such that those terms may only be used if at least 50 % of the sugar- content of the product originates from honey;
61. Supports the idea of the Member States making it obligatory to indicate the place of origin of the honey on honey and other bee products, as is the case with certain meat and dairy products;

Promoting bee products and therapeutic use of honey

62. Welcomes the European Honey Breakfast initiative, and encourages the Member States to inform children about locally made products and rediscovering long-established production traditions; notes that honey is high in calories and can be used in moderation to replace refined sugar and other sweeteners, thus contributing to public health;

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63. Stresses that honey is one of the agricultural products that could be included in the 'School fruit, vegetables and milk' scheme; encourages the Member States to boost the participation of local honey producers in the relevant school programmes, and stresses the importance of educational measures aimed at raising awareness among young people of local products, while opening up the world of farming to children;

64. Calls on the Commission to put forward a proposal to increase annual EU support for these programmes by 50 %, so as to enable them to operate effectively, with pre-school competitions being organised and local products such as honey, olives and olive oil being properly included;

65. Calls on the Commission to draw up a report on the amount of honey consumed and consumption patterns in all Member States, and also another report on the various therapeutic practices employing honey, pollen, royal jelly and bee venom in the EU; stresses the growing importance of apitherapy as a natural alternative to treatment using conventional medicines, and therefore encourages all Member States to promote those products among medical and paramedical practitioners and the public in the EU;

66. Calls on the Commission to consider the voluntary introduction of the brand 'Honey from EU', designating honey originating 100 % and exclusively in the EU Member States; also calls on the Commission to do its utmost to ensure that the UN declares the 20th of May as World Bee Day;

67. Calls on the Commission to allocate a specific sum from the EU's promotional budget for advertising EU honey products for consumption and medical purposes, including measures such as promoting the direct sale of honey at local markets, public honey tastings, workshops and other events; encourages the Member States to boost local and regional sales of honey, in particular organic honey, with all the means at their disposal, in particular by providing intensive support for short supply chains through their rural development programmes, and promoting high-quality products based on geographical indication schemes; acknowledges the role of consuming locally-produced honey as a means to build up resistance to local allergens; calls on the Commission to include honey wax as a product covered by Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs, given the growing interest from consumers and producers as well as its long-standing traditional production in some Member States;

68. Proposes that the Member States encourage, by all means at their disposal, the use of beekeeping products such as pollen, propolis or royal jelly in the pharmaceutical industry;

69. Calls on the Commission to promote harmonisation of the Member States' legislation concerning organic honey production, in order to overcome any discrepancies that may prevent European organic beekeepers from having access to the market under the same rules;

70. Asks the Commission to ensure that honey and other bee products are considered as 'sensitive products' in ongoing or future negotiations for free trade agreements, since direct competition may expose the EU apiculture sector to excessive or unsustainable pressure; calls on the Commission, therefore, to potentially exclude them from the scope of free trade negotiations;

71. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop, in conjunction with the farming and beekeeping sectors, a labelling system promoting the establishment of a responsible production system for bees;

72. Welcomes the ongoing trend towards urban beekeeping, and calls, at the same time, for close and mandatory integration between regional beekeepers' associations and the authorities, and for the introduction of minimum standards in order to put a stop to abusive husbandry practices and prevent the wilful spreading of disease and illness among bee populations;

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73. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the national parliaments.
