



# Slow Food Facts

**'No bees, no food'**



## Bees are necessary for our survival

All over the world, honey bee populations – both wild and farmed – are falling dramatically. This decline is increasingly being linked to the extensive use of pesticides and the destruction of their habitats. Bees and other pollinating insects play a crucial role in biodiversity and agriculture and form an integral part of our food system by pollinating crops that end up as food on our tables. Losing them can have disastrous consequences. Without bees, a large number of wild and cultivated plant species will soon no longer exist, and the survival of entire ecosystems on which we depend are currently at risk.

## Bee-ing scared yet?

Parasites and disease, climate change and air pollution all have an impact on bee health, as do the flowerless landscapes (food deserts) that humans have created. But perhaps the most serious threat is the impact of pesticides and insecticides. It is believed that one of the main culprits for the sharp decline in bees is the commonly used insecticide neonicotinoids (found in products such as Monsanto's 'Roundup'). It is suggested neonicotinoids may impact bees' ability to forage, learn and remember navigation routes to and from their food sources and have a serious impact on their immune systems. In 2013, the European Food Safety Authority published findings showing that neonicotinoids especially pose an unacceptably high risk, resulting in a partial ban on their usage within the EU. The link between GMOs and bee decline is also being evaluated. Unfortunately Roundup is still widely available – and used – in Australia.

## What can you do?

There are some relatively easy things that you can do that will really help our bees:

1. Plant as many bee friendly flowers in your garden or on your verandah as you possibly can. Try and choose different colours and varieties, so that there is food for them throughout all seasons.
2. Stop using pesticides and nasty chemicals! If you must spray – try a mixture of vinegar (2 litres), epsom salt (1 cup) and dishwashing detergent (¼ cup) which works a treat. Please don't use Roundup (or similar products) ever again!
3. Build an insect hotel for bees and other pollinators. Find tips here: [http://www.hume.vic.gov.au/files/62a7e827-fad5-416b-b7f7-a273011ec16e/How\\_to\\_Make\\_a\\_Bee\\_Hotel.pdf](http://www.hume.vic.gov.au/files/62a7e827-fad5-416b-b7f7-a273011ec16e/How_to_Make_a_Bee_Hotel.pdf)
4. Want to learn more about bees and why they are disappearing? Check out this video [https://www.ted.com/talks/marla\\_spivak\\_why\\_bees\\_are\\_disappearing?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/marla_spivak_why_bees_are_disappearing?language=en)

For more information visit our website ([www.slowfoodaustralia.com.au](http://www.slowfoodaustralia.com.au)) or Facebook page (@SlowFoodAustralia) or get in touch with your nearest Slow Food community.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture organisation estimates that **out of some 100 crop species - which provide 90% of our food worldwide - 71 of those species are pollinated by bees.**



In northern China bees have now completely disappeared due to excessive use of insecticides. **People now have to climb trees with bags of pollen and tiny brushes to hand-pollinate their fruit crops.** If you don't think this can happen in our country, think again! Bees are really disappearing at a rapid pace all over the world.



There are **over 20,000 species of bees in the world** - the most popular bee is the honey bee. An average bee colony consists of 40 to 50,000 individual bee organisms.