

Testimony in Support of Neonicotinoid Insecticides

**By Alvin Winslow, CCA, NMP, BS, MS Owner/Manager of Winslow Agriculture LLC
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Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

Good afternoon. My name is Alvin Winslow, and I am a certified crop advisor and the owner of Winslow Agriculture LLC located in New Gloucester. I provide crop consulting services and contract research in Maine, working with 17,000 acres of potatoes, 10,000 acres of corn, 10,000 acres of grass, and 600 acres of small vegetable production. Like a honey bee, I work for the farmers, and they take good care of me!

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of the continued use and careful regulation of neonicotinoid insecticides. I believe that these insecticides represent one of the safest and most effective classes of chemistry available to farmers today. The last couple of years we have been working towards lowering our Environmental Impact of our spray programs by selecting pesticides with a low EIQ numbers. These numbers are available in the Cornell Integrated Crop and Pest Management Guidelines. When you consider the low EIQ numbers for neonicotinoids vs some of the older chemistry, it's easy to see how we can lower our environmental impact with these products. When used according to guidelines, neonicotinoids can effectively protect crops from pests, and improve the planet. Those of us who have been around long enough, I started working as commercial pesticide applicator in 1992, before we had neonics, and I can tell you firsthand that prior to neonics we were killing almost every beneficial insect and pollinator with the old chemicals. Neonics were a big step forward, and continue to be an important part of integrated pest management.

I would like to emphasize that with responsible application and adherence to safety protocols, neonicotinoids do not pose significant risks to our beekeepers or the environment. Concerns regarding neonicotinoids are not new; approximately 15 years ago, this issue was heavily debated across the country. I recall attending the Pollinator Health and Safety Conference in Portland, Maine, in November of 2014, where they addressed concerns about the effects of neonicotinoids on honeybees. Scientific research presented at that conference demonstrated that the primary causes of colony collapse include existing parasites, particularly Varroa mites; viruses and diseases affecting the bees; poor nutrition due to limited pollen sources; lack of genetic diversity; and stress from transportation and overcrowding. The evidence clearly indicated that neonicotinoids were not responsible for colony collapse. The big surprise at that conference was that the miticides being used to control the Varro mites, when mixing two products together trying to get rid of the mites, was actually creating a toxic cocktail that was contributing to colony collapse – a good reminder of how important it is to follow the label!

Neonicotinoids are a vital tool in modern agriculture, offering effective protection against a wide range of harmful pests while minimizing the need for frequent applications. Because they are often applied as seed treatments, they target pests during the early stages of crop development, reducing the overall environmental footprint compared to traditional foliar sprays.

I would like to offer as testimony my observations about the importance of neonicotinoid seed treatments. Seed treatment technology is amazing in that it places a very small amount of chemical in exactly the right place targeting specific pests and utilizing a fraction of the material

that would be needed for alternative treatments. To illustrate I think I'm the last person in the state of Maine who was calibrating Lorsban applicators on corn planters. Imagine putting down 10 or 12 lbs. of Lorsban per acre, yes it stinks and it was miserable to work with but if we didn't do something the corn seed would be destroyed by seed corn maggots, wire worms, a whole variety of white grubs and other small soil insects that were hungry and eager to eat your corn seed. With the invention of neonicotinoid seed treatments a very small amount of chemical directly on the seed prevented all these pests, our cornfields tell the story - we have beautiful, even uniform stands of corn when we protect the seed. Seven years ago, I received 3 phone calls one in Vermont one in New Hampshire and one in Maine all three farms had significant stand losses in their cornfields. When I investigated these problems I found all of the old pests mentioned above dining on their seeds. It turned out that the common factor was a misapplication of the seed treatment on a particular batch of seed each of the farmers recalled that when they opened the bag the seed treatment had fallen off the seed and was laying in the bottom of the bag like a powder. When they planted this untreated seed the pests attacked. This is what will happen if you ban neonicotinoid treated seeds and not just corn but a whole host of small vegetable production will be lost or we may have to revert to using the old chemicals that are worse for the farmers and worse for the environment and definitely worse for the bees.

Research and real-world usage have shown that, when used according to label instructions and integrated into a broader pest management strategy, neonicotinoids pose a low risk to pollinators and non-target species. Ongoing advances in application techniques, seed coatings, and risk mitigation efforts continue to improve their safety profile.

Rather than banning or overly restricting this important tool, the focus should be on science-based regulation, farmer education, and continued investment in monitoring and research. With responsible stewardship, we can balance the needs of agriculture with the health of ecosystems and pollinator populations.

I urge this committee to support policies that preserve access to neonicotinoids while promoting responsible use. Farmers need tools that are both effective and sustainable, and neonics have proven themselves to be exactly that.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely, Alvin Winslow

Owner/Manager, Winslow Agriculture LLC