

PRESS RELEASE

from the COLOSS Network



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Losses of honey bee colonies over the 2012/13 winter

Preliminary results from an international study

The honey bee research network COLOSS¹ has today announced the preliminary results of an international study to investigate winter colony losses. Data were collected from 19 countries from Europe, Israel and Algeria. In total, more than 15,000 beekeepers provided overwintering mortality and other data of their colonies. Collectively, they managed more than 280,000 colonies. A preliminary analysis of the data shows that the mortality rate over the 2012-13 winter varied between countries, ranging from 6% in Israel to 37% in Ireland, and there were also marked regional differences within some countries. These figures compare with losses over the same period of 31% and 34% recently reported from the USA² and the UK³ respectively.

The protocol used to collect this COLOSS data has been internationally standardized to allow comparisons and joint analysis of the data. A more detailed analysis of risk factors calculated from the whole dataset, as well as further colony loss data from other countries will be published in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Apicultural Research*⁴ later in the year. The data show that Poland and Finland have each year experienced losses of about 17%. Countries in south eastern Europe (Slovakia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia) have had average losses of less than 10%, but in 2012 losses were slightly higher. In central Europe (Germany, Switzerland, Austria) losses rose to above 20% in 2012 but went back to around 15% in 2013. In the neighbouring Netherlands, losses were above 20% for five years, but decreased in 2013 to a level comparable with Germany and Switzerland. Interestingly, we now see losses rising to substantially higher levels in northern countries (Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Ireland, UK) whose losses were around the 15% in the previous years.

Co-ordinator of the COLOSS Monitoring and Diagnosis Working Group Dr Romée van der Zee from the Dutch Centre for Bee Research says: *"We have observed an interesting pattern in honey bee colony losses over the last 3 years. These results emphasise that losses in many countries remain greater than beekeepers consider are acceptable. We believe that many factors including the weather are responsible for these losses, which show patterns over the years which are not bound to administrative borders"*. [Ends]

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

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NOTES FOR EDITORS:-

1. COLOSS is a network formerly funded by the European Union COST Programme (Action FA0803) and currently by the Ricola Foundation – Nature & Culture, which aims to explain and prevent massive honey bee colony losses. The network does not directly support science, but aims to coordinate international research activities across Europe and worldwide, promoting cooperative approaches and a research programme with a strong focus on the transfer of science into beekeeping practice. COLOSS has more than 300 members drawn from 62 countries worldwide. It is chaired by Prof. Peter Neumann of the University of Bern, Switzerland. Website <http://www.coloss.org/>

2. Information on US honey bee colony losses over the 2012-3 winter from the Bee Informed Partnership is available at:-

<http://beeinformed.org/2013/05/winter-loss-survey-2012-2013/>

3. Information on UK honey bee colony losses over the 2012-3 winter from the British Beekeepers Association is available at:-

http://www.bbka.org.uk/files/pressreleases/bbka_release_winter_survival_survey_13_june_2013_1371062171.pdf

4. The peer-reviewed scientific journal the *Journal of Apicultural Research* has been published by the International Bee research Association since 1962. It includes original research articles, theoretical papers; scientific notes and comments; together with authoritative reviews on scientific aspects of the biology, ecology, natural history, conservation and culture of all types of bee.

<http://www.ibra.org.uk/categories/jar>



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