

FAO advocates sustainable agricultural to protect bees and pollinators

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The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on May 20, marked World Bee Day 2023 with a global ceremony in which participants emphasized the importance of promoting sustainable agricultural practices that respect pollinators' vital role in nature.

Under the theme "Bee engaged in pollinator-friendly agricultural production", World Bee Day 2023 drew attention to the threats endangering these insects and the need to address them. The Republic of Slovenia initiated World Bee Day in 2016 at the FAO Regional Conference for Europe backed by the United Nations.

FAO's commitment to protecting bees and pollinators. A pre-event for the Second International Symposium on Biosecurity in Beekeeping was organized by FAO in conjunction with World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH). In addition to providing participants with information on the latest developments in bee biosecurity, the international organizations involved are implementing initiatives to ensure bee health around the globe.

Through the Global Action on Pollination Services for Sustainable Agriculture, FAO promotes policies that encourage biological plant pest control and reduce pesticide use, aiming to increase habitat diversity in agricultural and urban settings. In order to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through knowledge exchange and sustainable rural transformation, FAO is using new technologies such as TECA, an online platform that collects successful agricultural technologies and practices. The TECA platform, launched by FAO in 2002 and managed by the FAO's Research and Extension Unit, offers a systematic and user-friendly online repository of family farming technologies, practices, and innovations.

What are Pollinator-friendly Agricultural practices?

Pollination is essential for the maintenance of plant biodiversity and the survival of our ecosystems. About 75 percent of the world's crops which produce fruits and other seeds for human consumption depend, at least in part, on pollinators including bees.

Protecting bees and other pollinators is essential to guarantee agricultural production, food security, ecosystem restoration, and plant health," explains FAO Director-General QU Dongyu.

"Pollinator-friendly practices include crop rotation and diversity, reducing pesticide use, and restoring and protecting. Precision agriculture tools and innovations can even protect bees. Using technology and data to optimize fertilizer and irrigation practices can reduce excessive nutrients and chemicals in water, which harm pollinators and their habitats," added FAO Director-General.

World Bee Day has contributed significantly to raising awareness of the importance of bees and other pollinators and promoting international cooperation to protect them. Slovenia alone has co-created more than 300 pollinator projects with partners on all continents. Pollinators have entered many more school curricula, political debates, research agendas, business plans, and agricultural practices" said NataÅja Pirc Musar, President of the Republic of Slovenia.

Global bee and pollinator experts highlighted how unsustainable agriculture and pesticide abuse contribute to bees' and other pollinators' reduced access to food and nesting sites. This exposes them to harmful chemicals that weaken their immune systems, sometimes killing them. They also noted how intensive monoculture production often leads to the elimination of natural areas rich in flowering plants. These areas are replaced by a single large crop, causing significant damage to biodiversity and ecosystems.