



OPEN LETTER

FROM THE ITALIAN ALLIANCE FOR THE "SAVE BEES AND FARMERS!" ECI

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The Italian Associations of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)¹ "Save Bees and Farmers"² with this open letter ask you to commit yourself to safeguarding pollinators, an important component of our biodiversity that provides a fundamental ecosystem service for our planet, our well-being and economy: pollination.

IPBES (2017) estimated that the reproduction of 88% of the world's wild flowering plants depends, at least in part, on pollination, and about 70% of the world's 115 agricultural crops of global importance benefit from animal pollination. In Europe, the production of about 84% of the 264 crop species depends on the activity of pollinating insects (EFSA, 2009).

The pollination of flowers, on which 35% of world agricultural production depends, is estimated to have an annual economic value of over 153 billion euros globally and 22 billion euros in Europe. For many agricultural crops in Europe, the contribution of pollinators can be as much as up to half the market value of the products. The second Report on Natural Capital Natural Capital in Italy, presented in 2018, devotes a chapter to the ecosystem service of pollination, reporting data from the latest research carried out for its economic quantification. In 2012, the value of agricultural production of apples, pears and peaches in Italy was of 473.48 million euros and the economic value of apples, pears and peaches directly dependent on pollination was estimated at 56.96 million euros.

Biodiversity, in particular that of bees and other pollinators in agricultural ecosystems, is in drastic decline in Italy, Europe and worldwide. On a global scale, more than 40% of invertebrate pollinators are at risk of disappearing, jeopardising the ecosystem balance and the service to human society that depends on it. In Europe, almost half of all insect species are in serious decline and a third of bees and butterflies are threatened with extinction³, while 37% of wild bee populations are declining dramatically, the decline in butterfly populations has reached 31%.

Numerous scientific studies, the European Commission and the European Court of Auditors have identified the use of chemical pesticides in agriculture as one of the main causes of this decline⁴⁵. The negative impacts of pesticides on the environment and human health should have already been reduced with the implementation of EU Directive 2009/128/EC on the sustainable use of pesticides⁶ and the dependence of agriculture on chemicals should have been significantly reduced.

However, the implementation of this Directive has been inadequate in many Member States - including Italy.

The "National Action Plans for the sustainable use of plant protection products" lacked targets and concrete measures, and in the case of Italy expired in February 2018 and not yet renewed.

In the meantime, the data published on 23 December by ISPRA in its biannual report on pesticides in water⁷ still show an alarming number of cases of environmental contamination by plant protection

1 https://ec.europa.eu/info/about-european-commission/get-involved/european-citizens-initiative_it

2 <https://www.savebeesandfarmers.eu/ita>

3 Source: *Red list of european bees and Red list of european butterflies*, IUCN 2015

4 https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/News/NEWS2007_09/INSR_Pollinators_EN.pdf

5 Report on the implementation of the Directive on the sustainable use of pesticides

6 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

7 https://www.isprambiente.gov.it/files2020/pubblicazioni/rapporti/rapporto_334_2020.pdf

products, with limits exceeding those provided for by current regulations. The European Commission has reacted to these concerns with the two Strategies "Farm to Fork"⁸ and "Biodiversity 2030"⁹, presented on 20 May 2020, indicating the objective of a 50% reduction in the use of pesticides throughout the European Union by 2030, along with other important objectives that chart the course for a true ecological transition of European agriculture.

The Associations of the European Citizens' Initiative "Save Bees and Farmers" welcomed this target and welcomed this goal of reducing pesticide use as an important step towards healthier and more important step towards healthier and more sustainable agriculture. The powerful agrochemical lobbies and agricultural the powerful agrochemical lobbies and agricultural corporations that defend the current dominant agricultural model have instead immediately challenged the feasibility of the objectives of the two European strategies and launched a communication campaign and lobbying actions to counter them.

In this new context, the European Citizens' Initiative "Save Bees and Farmers" takes on even greater significance and even greater value as an instrument with which all citizens can express their support for the European Commission's proposals and share the objectives of the EU's the objectives of the EU "Farm to Fork" and "Biodiversity 2030" strategies.

To date, more than 520,000 European citizens, including about 20,000 Italians, have already signed the ECI "Let's Save Bees and Farmers", despite the difficulties linked to the health emergency of Covid 19 which is now the first emergency for all. Many other citizens will join within the new ICE deadline extended to June 2021, in order to reach the goal of 1 million signatures, in at least 7 EU Member States, thanks to the efforts of more than 30 citizens' associations and committees in the EU. associations and citizens' committees in our country and more than 250 organisations across Europe.

2021 will be a decisive year to start the ecological transition of our agriculture and to reach the 2030 objectives of the EU Strategies "Farm to Fork" and "Biodiversity 2030". At European level, the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy will be defined and the revision of EU Directive 2009/128/EC on the sustainable use of pesticides will be initiated. At the national level, the post-2023 CAP National Strategic Plan and the new National Action Plan on the sustainable use of plant protection products will be drafted and approved. sustainable use of plant protection products, two important planning tools for agriculture and environment policies that will have to incorporate the objectives indicated by the two European strategies.

In addition, the National Recovery and Resilience Plan should be approved and made operational, whose extraordinary "New Generation EU" funds should contribute to achieving the objectives of the European Green Deal, thus implementing interventions for agriculture and the environment consistent with the EU strategies "Farm to Fork" and "Biodiversity 2030".

In the light of recent revelations that a coalition of states opposed to the target of a 50% reduction in pesticides by 2030^{10,11} is forming in Europe, and bearing in mind the urgent need to initiate the ecological transition in our country, as also argued by Prime Minister Mario Draghi, in his speech to

8 https://ec.europa.eu/food/farm2fork_en

9 https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/strategy/index_en.htm

10 <https://www.pan-europe.info/press-releases/2020/12/pan-europe-reveals-member-states-act-against-eu-pesticide-reduction>

11 <https://ilsalvagente.it/2020/12/06/98610/>

the Senate on the occasion of the vote of confidence in the new government, we hope that all national political decision-makers, from the new executive to the broad parliamentary majority that supports it and the Regions, do not miss the opportunity to achieve the ecological transition of our agriculture, freeing it from pesticides, as a prerequisite for the sustainable social and economic growth of our country.

With this open letter we therefore ask all of you, policy makers, to take courageous and far-sighted positions and initiatives to reinforce the objectives of the two EU Strategies "Farm to Fork" and "Biodiversity 2030", to adopt coherent national Plans and Programmes, and to make up for the serious delays in updating the NAP pesticides, drafting the post-2023 CAP National Strategic Plan and approving the National Organic Farming Act. These are all indispensable tools to protect pollinators, agriculture, the environment and citizens' health.

The Citizens' Associations and Committees of the European Citizens' Initiative "Save Bees and Farmers".

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Assobio

BeeLife European Beekeeping Coordination

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Legambiente

LIPU – Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli – BirdLife

Marcia Stop Pesticidi

NaturaSì

Navdanya International

No Pesticidi Azzano Decimo

Pesticide Action Network (PAN) Italia

Più Eco - Ecologisti Confederati

Rete Api Urbane

Rete Contadina

Unaapi - Unione Nazionale Associazioni Apicoltori Italiani

Unipax - Unione Mondiale per la Pace e i Diritti Fondamentali dell'uomo e dei popoli

Slow Food Italia

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Sottoscritta anche da: Greenpeace Italia