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Concept Note

2nd Observance of World Bee Day

FAO Headquarters, Rome

20 May 2019

Background

A Growing Global Issue

Bees are among the hardest working creatures on the planet. Bees and other pollinators provide the important ecosystem service of ensuring out-crossing thus reproduction and biodiversity of many cultivated and wild plants. A wide variety of plants critical to human well-being and livelihoods require pollinators.

In many areas, bees, pollinators, and many other insects are declining in abundance. This has a significant influence on global food security. Pollinators such as bees, birds and bats affect 35 percent of the world's crop production, increasing outputs of 87 of the leading food crops worldwide, plus many plant-derived medicines. About two-thirds of the crop plants that feed the world rely on pollination by insects or other animals to produce healthy fruits and seeds for human consumption. Pollination benefits human nutrition – enabling not only the production of an abundance of fruits, nuts and seeds, but also more variety and better quality. Bees produce 1.7 bn tons of honey as well as other products and to enable them do so, it is important that the environment is managed following consistent and appropriate techniques.

In this context, farmers should be aware that bees and other pollinators are important for their crops. Actions adopted by farmers in their agricultural practices therefore impact the environment as well as all pollinators that feed on plants and crops. In areas where there is intensive agriculture, it is important for farmers and beekeepers to collaborate very closely in order to reach mutual benefits and to also safeguard the well-being of these pollinators by addressing a number of stressors that affect pollinators' health:

- a) The spread of monoculture and unsustainable intensive agricultural production coupled with land use change affects the variety of the pollinators' nutrition sources and subsequently, their health;
- b) Pesticides can lead to mortality or sub-optimal development of pollinators;
- c) Pathogens, pests, and invasive alien species can lead to competition, mortality, or sub-optimal development of pollinators; and,
- d) Climate change and the interactions of the above are threatening pollinators on a global level and it is therefore necessary to address these drivers.

Pollinators are also valuable monitors of the state of the environment and provide good information to ensure its proper conservation.

Despite its importance, pollination as a factor in food production and food security has been poorly understood and under-appreciated, partially because pollination has always been provided by nature at no 'explicit cost'. As farm fields have become larger, and the use of agricultural chemicals that impact beneficial insects such as pollinators along with plant pests has increased, pollination services are showing declining trends in many parts of the world. As pollinators are on the decline around the world, the global food economy is showing striking increases in the demand for pollination services. Demand is increasing particularly fast in developing countries.

To bring global attention to the importance of bees and other pollinators, in 2017, after three years of efforts led by the Government of Slovenia, the UN General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution declaring 20 May as World Bee Day and the first observance of World Bee Day was held on 20 May 2018 in Ljubljana, Republic of Slovenia.

World Bee Day – 20 May

On the occasion of the second observance of World Bee Day, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in partnership with the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and Apimondia (as the international organization representing the beekeeping sector)], will organize a focused event at the Headquarters of FAO on **improving the collaboration among stakeholders and raising awareness on the importance of bees**.

The one-and-one-half hour event will be organized as a plenary session, beginning with opening addresses, followed by a round of discussion, each introduced by keynote speakers.

Objective

The overall objective of the 2nd Observance of World Bee Day is to focus public attention on the role of beekeeping, bees and other pollinators in increasing food security and fighting hunger as well as in providing key ecosystem services for agriculture.

Specific objectives:

- Engage Ministries of Agriculture – and other key line ministries - to ensure that the role of pollinators is recognized and duly protected in national action plans and responses.
- Raise awareness of farmers on the impact their practices have on pollinators' development, honey production, and the environment.
- Highlight the role of beekeepers in food production in support of rural livelihoods.
- Invite the general public to help preserve and protect bees and other pollinators especially on the role they play in addressing food security.
- Raise awareness on the importance of pollinators, including among youth.
- Showcase and feature FAO's work on pollinators, especially the 2nd International Pollinators Initiative.
- Create media interest around the role and importance of pollinators.

Expected outcomes:

- Awareness raised on the key role of pollinators in food security and ecosystem services.
- Challenges facing pollinators identified and solutions discussed.
- FAO work and expertise on pollinators and their conservation and sustainable use recognized.
- Partnership and action opportunities identified, created and further developed to recognize and safeguard pollinators.

Target audiences

The list below is not in order of priority.

- Ministries of Agriculture, Environment, Fisheries, Finance, Forestry, Foreign Affairs, etc.;

- Member countries / Permanent Representatives;
- Beekeeping sector (Apimondia);
- Civil Society Organizations working on pollinator protection;
- Convention on Biological Diversity and IPBES delegations;
- General public;
- Specific media outlets.