



## French stakeholders care for pollinators



**Strategic responses to risks and opportunities associated with pollinators and pollination: examples of responses by French stakeholders**

## SUMMARY

In its summary for policymakers (SPM) on pollinators, pollination and food production, the Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) addresses the main drivers of change, along with policy and management options to reduce risks and enhance opportunities related to pollinators and pollination services. IPBES work focused on pollination associated with food production, and therefore most of the potential responses relate to the agricultural sector and bee husbandry. Pollinators, wild and managed alike, however play a much greater role in maintaining ecosystems and habitats since nearly 90% of wild flowering plant species depend, at least in part, on the transfer of pollen by animals<sup>1</sup>.

In France, pollinators have been the focus of two recent high-level national policies: the National Action Plan for wild Pollinators (2016), lead by the Ministry of Environment and the Plan for the Sustainable Development of Beekeeping (2013), lead by the Ministry of Agriculture. Together, these two policies include most of the strategic responses presented by IPBES in the SPM.

The French Foundation for Research on Biodiversity (FRB) has asked its Stakeholders Advisory Board to report existing measures they are currently implementing to improve the status and reduce the pressures on pollinators. Nearly 250 examples of initiatives were reported by 25 members of the Board, including NGOs, public services, businesses, unions and local authorities. They are implemented in France mainland and the islands of Martinique and New Caledonia.

FRB's Scientific Council welcomed the measures reported by the Stakeholders Advisory Board and encouraged all stakeholders to follow the way, noting however a major gap: as for now, the effectiveness of the strategic responses is seldom assessed through a scientific process. The real benefits the management options deliver to pollinators should be assessed together by the scientific community and the stakeholders, and the results made available publicly.

The key findings next page are drawn from the collation of stakeholders' reports.

<sup>1</sup> - IPBES (2016): Summary for policymakers of the assessment report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services on pollinators, pollination and food production. S.G. Potts, V. L. Imperatriz-Fonseca, H. T. Ngo, J. C. Biesmeijer, T. D. Breeze, L. V. Dicks, L. A. Garibaldi, R. Hill, J. Settele, A. J. Vanbergen, M. A. Aizen, S. A. Cunningham, C. Eardley, B. M. Freitas, N. Gallai, P. G. Kevan, A. Kovač-Lcs-Hostya-Łnszki, P. K. Kwapong, J. Li, X. Li, D. J. Martins, G. Nates-Parra, J. S. Pettis, R. Rader, and B. F. Viana (eds.). Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, Bonn, Germany. 36 pages..

## AGRICULTURE

Many stakeholders promote grasslands management for pollinators, such as setting up permanent grassland, mowing at different time of the year and planting specific plants. One flagship measure is the “Contest for the best flowered meadow” organised by the French national and regional parks and supported by several businesses.

Certification is widely used in the private sector and ranges from bee-specific labels (e.g. “Bee Friendly”) to more generic labels rewarding good agriculture practices (e.g. LU’Harmony).

Many stakeholders, including the seed industry, refer to the government’s plan ECOPHYTO to reduce the use and drift of pesticides. This also applies to the management of public areas and businesses facilities. Several members of the Stakeholders Advisory Board supported a ban on

neonicotinoids and called for a strict control of potential conflicts of interest when impact assessments of pesticides are conducted.

Several changes of conventional agricultural practices were mentioned, such as flowering fallows and crop rotation. Others, such as no-till farming and farming adaptation to climate change were little mentioned, and their potential to support wild and managed pollinators should be highlighted. The structures in charge of land-use planning were reported to adopt more participative approaches, including farmers, beekeepers and NGOs in decision-making.

There is hardly any forestry measure related to pollinators reported by stakeholders, except some examples in national parks where dead wood is left on site and in some agroforestry projects.

## HABITAT PROTECTION AND RESTORATION

A wide range of stakeholders are involved in activities related to natural habitats restoration, including in urban areas. Several businesses report restoration activities in brownfields or quarries. There are also several institutions in France whose core mission is to protect and restore habitats such as the Conservatory for natural areas and the French National Parks. They can lead restoration activities targeting specific pollinator species, such as the Apollo butterfly in the National Park of Cévennes.

The green-blue grid is a tool for land-use planning adopted by the government in 2012. It promotes the conservation and restoration of habitat patches and the connectivity between habitats through corridors. Stakeholders’ actions are framed within this grid and generally benefit pollinators. For example, New Caledonia produced a map to identify key corridors needing to be restored and businesses managing infrastructures contribute to maintaining biodiversity corridors.



## EDUCATION AND OUTREACH PROGRAMMES

Almost all stakeholders who reported actions to promote pollinators reported education or outreach activities targeting a variety of audiences: from employees’ training to children school events to agriculture and agronomy students.

Research is underway in France to study, among others, the competition for resources between wild and domestic pollinators and guidance regarding beekeeping location, and interactions between introduced managed bees and native solitary bee species. Monitoring programmes, including citizen science, are on going for several taxa such as butterflies and bees. NGOs and protected areas are particularly active on these issues.

There are however few reported monitoring programmes specifically dedicated to pollination services, and payment for pollination services are not well spread across the country. As IPBES SPM points out, there is a general lack of taxonomic expertise in the country, and there are limited examples where indigenous and local knowledge on pollinators are used.

Few respondents mentioned projects related to the quantification of pollination services. This was however carried out in the French Assessment for Ecosystem and Ecosystem Services (EFESE).

## BEEKEEPING PRACTICES

Few stakeholders were directly involved with beekeeping practices, some of which including trade of queens and moving hives. Such practices were identified by IPBES as a vector for pollinators’ infections and diseases and are addressed in the French plan for the sustainable development of beekeeping. There are conservatories in France and New Caledonia conserving and promoting native bee species and efforts are made to keep the sites free from parasites and diseases.

French stakeholders are hardly involved in developing alternative managed pollinators, except some experiments in greenhouses.

Few stakeholders reported to work on livelihood approaches, but beekeeping is rarely a main source of income for French households, however it provides a good supplement to regular income when existing. In these cases, certification of organic honey and hive products can contribute to enhance beekeepers’ livelihoods. Given the share of these products’ importation in French economy, there is a window of opportunity to increase French honey production, which would also contribute to rural development .