

Central Valley Business Times

EPA identifies threshold of harm to bees from controversial pesticide

WASHINGTON, D.C.

January 6, 2016 12:06pm



- First of four preliminary risk assessments for insecticides potentially harmful to bees
- “This preliminary assessment reflects our collaboration with the state of California and Canada”

It takes just 25 parts per billion for imidacloprid, a neonicotinoid insecticide, to start killing honeybees, says the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Imidacloprid potentially poses risk to hives when the pesticide comes in contact with certain crops that attract pollinators – such as the blossoms on citrus trees, the EPA says Wednesday.

EPA’s assessment is prepared in collaboration with California’s Department of Pesticide Regulation.

“Using science as our guide, this preliminary assessment reflects our collaboration with the state of California and Canada to assess the results of the most recent testing required by EPA,” says Jim Jones, assistant administrator of EPA’s Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention.

The preliminary risk assessment identifies a residue level for imidacloprid of 25 ppb, which sets a threshold above which effects on pollinator hives are likely to be seen, and at that level and below which effects are unlikely, EPA says.

The imidacloprid assessment is the first of four preliminary pollinator risk assessments for the neonicotinoid insecticides. Preliminary pollinator risk assessments for three other neonicotinoids, clothianidin, thiamethoxam, and dinotefuran, are scheduled to be released for public comment in December 2016.

A preliminary risk assessment of all ecological effects for imidacloprid, including a revised pollinator assessment and impacts on other species such as aquatic and terrestrial animals and plants will also be released in December 2016, the EPA says.

In addition to working with California, EPA coordinated efforts with Canada’s Pest Management Regulatory Agency. Canada’s Imidacloprid pollinator-only assessment – also released Wednesday – reaches the same preliminary conclusions as EPA’s report.

The 60-day public comment period will begin upon publication in the Federal Register. After the comment period ends, EPA may revise the pollinator assessment based on comments received and, if necessary, take action to reduce risks from the insecticide.

In 2015, EPA proposed to prohibit the use of pesticides that are toxic to bees, including the neonicotinoids, when crops are in bloom and bees are under contract for pollination services. The agency temporarily halted the approval of new outdoor neonicotinoid pesticide uses until new bee data is submitted and pollinator risk assessments are

complete.