

Homepage

Latest News

Search

Languages

Contact Us

About Us

Monday, August 18, 2008 14:23 GMT

IPS Direct to Your Inbox!

your em

ENVIRONMENT-GERMANY: Fleeing Famine, Bees Seek Asylum in Cities

By Julio Godoy



- Global Affairs
- Africa
- Asia-Pacific
 - Afghanistan
 - Iran
- Caribbean
 - Haiti
- Europe
 - Union in Diversity
- Latin America
- Mideast & Mediterranean
 - Iraq
 - Israel/Palestine
- North America
 - Neo-Cons
 - Bush at War

- Development
 - MDGs
 - City Voices
 - Corruption
- Civil Society
- Globalisation
- Environment
 - Energy Crunch
 - Climate Change
 - Tierramérica
- Human Rights
- Health
 - HIV/AIDS
- Indigenous Peoples
- Economy & Trade
- Labour
- Population
 - Reproductive Rights
 - Migration&Refugees
- Arts & Entertainment
- Education
- ExPress Freedom
- Columns
- In Focus

- Readers' Opinions
- Email News
- What is RSS?

- LANGUAGES**
- ENGLISH
 - ESPAÑOL
 - FRANÇAIS
 - ARABIC
 - DEUTSCH
 - ITALIANO
 - JAPANESE
 - NEDERLANDS
 - PORTUGUÊS
 - SUOMI
 - SVENSKA
 - SWAHILI
 - TÜRKÇE

BERLIN, Aug 14 (IPS) - For German bees, the countryside is no longer what it used to be. They are fleeing insecticides and genetically modified crops to take refuge in cities.

On Jul. 15, six German apiarists moved their 30,000 bees into Munich city, some 500 km south of Berlin. They were trying to save their bees from genetically modified maize crops near their village Kaisheim, some 80 km from Munich.

"If our bees were to come in touch with the genetically modified maize, and the honey was contaminated with it, we would not be allowed to sell it," Karl Heinz Bablock, one of the six apiarists who resettled their beehives, told IPS. In Germany, genetically modified crops are legal, but their harvests are forbidden for human consumption.

Earlier this year, Bablock and several of his colleagues filed a protest against the GM crops before a tribunal in Augsburg, 60 km northwest of Munich. But the court ruled in May that because the crops were legal, it was the apiarists who should move their beehives somewhere else.

"It is well known that bees live 90 percent of their lives in a perimeter of three kilometres," Bablock said. "But bees can fly up to 10 kilometres without any problem. Now we are really happy that the city of Munich has granted our bees asylum."

Thomas Radetzki, director of the South German apiarists union Millifera, said the bees will remain in Munich "until the end of the summer. By mid-August the maize bloom period is over, and the bees can go back home."

Relocation of bees is taking place all over Germany. "But in some regions, as in Brandenburg, around Berlin, it is almost impossible to flee from GMCs (genetically modified crops)," Radetzki told IPS. "The GMCs are everywhere, and bees come in touch with them one place or another."

But it is not just genetically modified crops that threaten bees. Changes in agriculture, such as the introduction of monocultures and the intensive use of pesticides are forcing bees to search for refuge in the cities.

Peter Rozenkranz, entomologist at the University of Stuttgart, told IPS that monocultures are depriving bees of their natural habitat. "After some good weeks in spring, bees are threatened by famine, because later in the year, there are almost no more blooming flowers."

Rosenkranz said that a satellite view of Germany illustrates the danger for bees. "You can see that in vast regions, especially in the eastern part of the country, there is nothing for bees to feed on."

Besides, he said, monocultures are saturated with pesticides and insecticides. "Practically all pesticides and insecticides are deadly for bees."

Apiarists in the federal state of Baden Wurttemberg reported the death of hundreds of thousands of bees in May. They blamed clothianidin, a chemical component of the insecticide Poncho Pro, used to protect maize seeds from larvae.

Manfred Raff, director of the regional apiarist association, told IPS that he had his bees analysed after the mass death. "We found abundant traces of clothianidin in the bees' bodies."

After Raff and 700 other apiarists in Baden Wurttemberg filed a complaint, the chemical giant Bayer Crop Science admitted that Poncho Pro had caused the death of the bees, but accused the seed producers of faulty use of the chemical.

For the bees, life in the cities has become attractive. "Today, it is easier for bees to live in the cities, because the recreational green areas and courtyards have exuberant, varied vegetation, which blossoms over several months, from early in the spring to the end of the summer," Rosenkranz said.

"In the cities, bees have only a couple of hundred metres to fly, from a public garden to a balcony to a courtyard to find luscious flowers, and mostly free of insecticides," he added.

Rosenkranz says bees have been facing extermination for years. In 2007 some 30 percent of the total German bee population died. Now 330 wild bee species, out of a total of 550, are enlisted as endangered.

Similar mass deaths of bees (also known as colony collapse disorder) have taken place in other countries, especially in the U.S., where in some 24 federal states regions in 2007 up to 70 percent of all bees died in mysterious circumstances.



MOST POPULAR

- ▶ US-GEORGIA: Expats Unite Against Russia
- ▶ GEORGIA: Israeli Arms Sales Raise New Concerns
- ▶ US/IRAN: Nothing Behind U.S. Allegations?
- ▶ TRADE-WEST AFRICA: Overfishing Linked to Food Crisis, Migration
- ▶ POLITICS-US: One-Fifth of Iraq Funding Paid to Contractors
- ▶ IRAQ: U.S. Officials Admit Worry over a 'Difficult' al-Maliki
- ▶ GEORGIA: Saakashvili Asked To Step Down
- ▶ GEORGIA: 'Provoked Into Aggression'
- ▶ GEORGIA: How the Hawks Won
- ▶ DEVELOPMENT: Escaping the Poverty Trap

Reality Check
Missing the Millennium Development Goals?

- ▶ DEVELOPMENT-AFRICA: Retailer Creates Jobs With Green Practices
- ▶ DEVELOPMENT: Escaping the Poverty Trap
- ▶ CUBA: Putting Their Houses in Order
- ▶ Q&A: Women Do Most, With Least Assistance
- ▶ CAMBODIA: 'Getting Decent Jobs for Women - The Challenge'
- ▶ HEALTH: Safe Sex With HIV - and Without a Condom?
- ▶ POLITICS: U.N. Renovation Threatens Disruption in World Body
- ▶ HEALTH-US: HIV On The Rise
- ▶ BRAZIL: Spreading the Cultural Tentacles of Inclusion
- ▶ TRADE: Malawi Still Hopeful That Investment Will Come

[More >>](#)

Digg This Story!

Share this story

- del.icio.us
- newsvine
- reddit
- StumbleUpon
- YAHOO! My Web

RSS FEED

The disappearance of bees -- pollinators par excellence -- would have deeper environmental consequences than the mere scarcity of honey. Food scarcity would grow if colonies of bees stop pollinating fruit, nut and vegetable crops.

"If the bee disappears from the surface of the earth, man would have no more than four years to live," Albert Einstein was quoted as saying. "No more bees, no more pollination...no more men!" (END/2008)

[Send your comments to the editor](#)

-  News Feeds
RSS/XML
-  Make IPS
News your
homepage!
-  Free Email
Newsletters
-  IPS Mobile
-  Text Only

RELATED IPS ARTICLES

- ▶ **ENVIRONMENT-EUROPE: No Consensus on Saving the Soil**
- ▶ **NORWAY: Farmed Salmon In Hot Water**

ADVERTISEMENT

<p>German Shepherd Pups/Dogs Imported From Germany. Excellent Hip Guarantee. Top German VA Lines!</p>	<p>Betterbee Inc For all your Beekeeping needs Beekeepers Serving Beekeepers</p>
---	--

ADVERTISEMENT



www.raidentech.com
Ads by Google

[READ IN IPSNEWS.NET >>](#)

ECONOMY, TRADE & FINANCE



▶ **PARAGUAY: "Today a New Country Is Born," Says New President**

[More >>](#)

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



▶ **PARAGUAY: "Today a New Country Is Born," Says New President**

[More >>](#)

DEATH PENALTY - STOP THE KILLING



▶ **Q&A: 'Innocent Persons Are Sentenced to Death'**

[More >>](#)

Contact Us | About Us | Subscription | News in RSS | Email News | Mobile | Text Only
Copyright © 2008 IPS-Inter Press Service. All rights reserved.