



Pollinator Stewardship Council

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May 4, 2015

Dear Senator,

The Pollinator Stewardship Council is deeply concerned about recent reports of U.S. Dept. of Agriculture scientists who have faced consequences or investigations, when their work called into question the health and safety of agricultural chemicals. These scientists documented clear actions that violated their scientific integrity, including:

- USDA officials retracting studies
- watering down findings
- removing scientists' names from authorship
- delaying approvals for publication of research papers.

In March, the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) filed a citizen [petition](http://www.peer.org/assets/docs/usda/3_26_15_USDA_%20Rule-Making_Petition.pdf)ⁱ (http://www.peer.org/assets/docs/usda/3_26_15_USDA_%20Rule-Making_Petition.pdf) requesting the U.S. Department of Agriculture adopt new policies to increase job protection for government scientists who question the health and safety of agricultural chemicals. The petition urges the agency to adopt policies to specifically prevent the “political suppression or alteration of studies and lay out clear procedures for investigating allegations and of scientific misconduct.” PEER found more than ten USDA scientists who have faced consequences or investigations, when their work called into question the health and safety of agricultural chemicals.

According to a recent [article in Reuters](http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/27/usda-petition-idUSL2N0WT1TQ20150327)ⁱⁱ, (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/27/usda-petition-idUSL2N0WT1TQ20150327>) one senior scientist with USDA said he experienced harassment and censorship, and told Reuters, “Your words are changed, your papers are censored or edited and you are not allowed to submit them at all.”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has a responsibility to protect the health and safety of the American public, and ensure long-term viability and sustainability of the environment and our natural resources. The possibility the USDA is prioritizing the interests of the chemical industry over those of the American public is unacceptable. The American people should be able to trust

The Pollinator Stewardship Council's mission is to defend managed and native pollinators vital to a sustainable and affordable food supply from the adverse impact of pesticides.

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their government and its employees to serve their constituents and not the profits of private companies. All of the research the USDA conducts must maintain scientific integrity and transparency to ensure it is guiding science-based policy decisions.

The Pollinator Stewardship Council is concerned about this report of U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists being harassed and their work censored or suppressed, especially work related to insecticides and herbicides. We urge you to ensure the USDA Inspector General's office conducts a thorough investigation into this matter. The USDA must maintain scientific integrity by not interfering with the valuable work of its scientists.

Scientific evidence has implicated insecticides as a leading driver of bee declines, and herbicides as a leading driver of the destruction of pollinator habitat. Beekeepers, honey producers, and the crops pollinated by managed and native pollinators rely on USDA scientists to protect the health of our food supply. Honey bees and native bees pollinate one third of the human diet. For a sustainable and affordable food supply pollinators are key to crop yields, affordable food, and diverse nutritious food.

The USDA must maintain scientific integrity, and not allow harassment, censorship or suppression of science-based findings. The Pollinator Stewardship Council urges you to take the necessary steps to ensure USDA maintains scientific integrity in the protection of the health and safety of the American public.

Sincerely,


Michele Colopy, Program Director

¹ Ruch, Jeff. Petition for Rulemaking United States Department of Agriculture. 26 March 2015.
http://www.peer.org/assets/docs/usda/3_26_15_USDA_%20Rule-Making_Petition.pdf

ⁱⁱ Gillam, Carey. Environmental group seeks greater protection for USDA scientists. Reuters. 27 March 2015.
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/27/usda-petition-idUSL2NOWT1TQ20150327>

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