

29.06.2017, Christina Wilkie

Pesticide Lobby Spends Millions To Defend Chemicals Tied To Bee Deaths

WASHINGTON — The chemical pesticide lobby is waging a multi-million dollar battle to prevent regulation of chemicals linked to the dramatic escalation in the deaths of pollinating bees over the past year.

CropLife America, the trade association that represents more than 90 of the world's biggest agro-chemical manufacturers, spent nearly \$2.5 million last year lobbying against bills that sought to increase oversight of chemical manufacturing and transfer, strengthen drinking water standards and fund research into the effects of pesticides on humans.

The lobbying expenses are part of an ongoing lobbying blitz launched in 2010 by the pesticide industry to fight any efforts by the Obama administration to regulate pesticides. Since 2008, Croplife America has poured \$11.2 million into lobbyists, and another \$643,000 into a PAC that backs congressional candidates sympathetic to the chemicals industry.

One class of pesticides that has international scientists and beekeepers increasingly worried are called neonicotinoids — a chemical cousin of nicotine. Neonicotinoids are genetically embedded into seeds before they are planted, and last much longer than traditional spray pesticides. Last week a group of beekeepers and environmental groups filed a lawsuit against the Environmental Protection Agency over its approval of certain neonics, as they are known.

CropLife argues that neonics are safe, and CropLife America president Jay Vroom told The New York Times this week that science “supports the notion that the products are safe and are not contributing in any measurable way to pollinator health concerns.” In 2011, Vroom earned \$826,146 in salary and benefits from Croplife and its related entities.

The current chairman of Croplife America is John Croshniak, a pesticide specialist at the chemical giant DuPont. The former chairman, who stepped down in 2011, is Bill Bucknell, a senior executive in the pesticides division of Bayer, another one of the world's largest chemical manufacturers.