



CENTER FOR FOOD SAFETY

Con Agra Foods

Attn: Orville Redenbacher, Act II, Jiffy Pop, Fiddle Faddle, Poppycock, Vogel, and Healthy Choice Popcorn
Consumer Affairs
PO BOX 3768
Omaha, NE, 68103

October 27, 2015

Re: Use of Treated Seed in Popcorn Products: Response Requested
Dear Con Agra Consumer Affairs,

As you may know, **bees and other pollinators are suffering alarming population losses**, and scientists consistently identify pesticides, specifically a group of insecticides called neonicotinoids as a primary factor in poor pollinator health. This issue affects all parts of our food system, and public perception supports this fact, as a recent poll found that an overwhelming majority (86%) of U.S. consumers believe that honeybees and other pollinators are important to our nation's food supply.

Center for Food Safety represents over 700,000 consumer members in the U.S. and abroad who are concerned about the threat of neonicotinoids ("neonics" for short) to bees and other vital pollinators. As such, **we are reaching out to you to determine whether your popcorn brands: Orville Redenbacher, Act II, Jiffy Pop, Fiddle Faddle, Poppycock, Vogel, and Healthy Choice are produced from corn seeds coated with neonicotinoids, and to speak with you about phasing out such use of neonic-coated seeds by transitioning to only uncoated popcorn seeds. We will be providing this information to our members and the concerned public so they can make informed decisions about which products they purchase.**

To date, more than 4 million Americans have called on the government to take stronger actions to protect bees from toxic pesticides like neonics. As consumers learn more about the negative impact of neonicotinoids on bees, water quality, and the broader environment, preference for products without them will continue to grow. Con Agra has everything to gain, including future sales and consumer loyalty, by transitioning away from coated seeds now.

The movement away from these harmful chemicals is spreading. In October 2015, Pop Weaver became the first food company in the U.S. to commit to phasing out uses of neonic seed coatings. The full statement from Pop Weaver is available on their website (and also attached with this letter). CFS's 700,000 plus members have applauded the company for its leadership and continue to thank Pop Weaver publicly on social media for taking steps to protect pollinators. In addition to this tremendous step from Pop Weaver, several other developments support the shift away from these bee-toxic chemicals:

- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has announced a moratorium on all new uses of neonicotinoids.
- In a recent poll, 56% of U.S. consumers said that they consider the declining populations of honey bees and other pollinators to be a serious problem—following only concerns around healthcare costs (76%) and jobs and the economy (75%), and on par with the problem of gas prices (55%), and when asked what is causing pollinator population declines, 70% of respondents felt it was primarily human behavior, including increased use of pesticides.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will implement a ban on neonicotinoid insecticides on all wildlife refuges nationwide by January 2016.
- The European Union instituted a moratorium on the most toxic uses of neonicotinoids.
- The Province of Ontario, Canada has announced plans to reduce the number of acres planted with neonicotinoid-coated corn and soybean seeds by 80 percent by 2017.

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Neonicotinoids are the most widely used insecticides in the world. Because they are systemic chemicals, they disperse through the vascular system of a treated plant rendering the whole plant toxic. **The largest single use of these chemicals is as a seed coating for annual field crops, and it is estimated that nearly 95-99% of all corn seed grown in the U.S. is coated with a neonicotinoid.**

There is a wealth of independent, peer-reviewed science demonstrating that neonicotinoids negatively affect honey bees, wild bees, and other beneficial insects. Further, despite marketing of these products as highly effective in pest management, many peer-reviewed studies, and a report from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency show little or no yield benefit associated with their use on crops, especially where there is low or moderate pest pressure.

The nationwide decline of bees and other pollinator species is not only a financial crisis for beekeepers and farmers who depend on pollination services; it is a direct hazard to the nation's food supply. Although there is no doubt that neonicotinoids are highly toxic to insects, their prophylactic use as seed treatment is an unnecessary pest management tool that is negatively impacting pollinator populations and thus the entire U.S. agricultural economy.

We recognize that sourcing uncoated corn seed in the U.S. is challenging, but it is not impossible by any means, as the recent announcement from Pop Weaver indicates. Furthermore, responding to requests from the Grain Farmers of Ontario, Dupont Pioneer has made uncoated corn seeds available to farmers in Canada. **We strongly believe that U.S. food companies should support their farmers and make requests for access to uncoated corn seeds in this country, helping to turn the tide to more sustainable farming practices.**

Given the countless risks, lack of benefits, and widespread consumer demand for pollinator protection, we ask that your company commit to phasing out the use of neonicotinoid-coated corn seeds for your popcorn products.

Please contact Center for Food Safety by November 7th, 2015 with your company statement on neonicotinoid seed coatings in your popcorn products.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue,



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