



CENTER FOR FOOD SAFETY

Steven J. Hermansky, Pharm.D, Ph.D., DABT
Vice President and Chief Food Safety and Quality Officer, ConAgra Foods, Inc.

Cc: Lanie Friedman, Director of Communications

ConAgra Foods
One ConAgra Drive, 1-100
Omaha, NE 68102-5001

February 5, 2016

Dear Dr. Hermansky,

Thank you for your letter regarding Orville Redenbacher's stance on pollinator health. While it is good to hear that your company has taken some steps to reduce pesticide exposure to bees and other pollinators, without addressing the full spectrum of risks from uses of neonicotinoid seed coatings, pollinators will continue to suffer adverse impacts from pesticide coated seeds.

As we articulated in our previous letters to your company, other leading popcorn companies have already committed to phase out the use of neonicotinoid seed coatings in their popcorn supply chain, most notably Pop Weaver and Pop Secret.¹ There is overwhelming consumer demand for more sustainable agricultural practices that protect pollinators and the broader environment. We strongly believe that the popcorn industry, ConAgra in particular, can play a leading role in supporting U.S. food companies and farmers in requesting that uncoated corn seeds are made more readily available in this country and drastically improve habitats for bees and other species.

With respect to your statement about your current neonicotinoid seed coating use level being 90 percent lower than the EPA's approved use level, can you please clarify what neonicotinoid seed coating product this refers to? Is this an across-the-board 90 percent reduced use level for all of your popcorn supply chain, or just in reference to one specific chemical used in Orville Redenbacher's production? It is unclear what standards you are measuring these reduction statistics against—please indicate the basis for these percentage reductions.

Although efforts to reduce dust off from seed coatings through new lubricants may help minimize pollinator exposure in some situations, by no means will this address the issue of the persistent and systemic nature of neonicotinoids. Honey bees and other pollinators will still be exposed to repeated doses of these chemicals through residues present in pollen, nectar, guttation droplets, and contaminated puddles and soil. All of

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

660 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, Suite 302
Washington, D.C. 20003
T: 202-547-9359 F: 202-547-9429

CALIFORNIA OFFICE

303 Sacramento Street, 2nd Floor
San Francisco, CA 94111
T: 415-826-2770 F: 415-826-0507

PACIFIC NORTHWEST OFFICE

917 SW Oak Street, Suite 300
Portland, OR 97205
T: 971-271-7372 F: 971-271-7374

HAWAII OFFICE

1132 Bishop Street, Suite 2107
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
T: 808-681-7688

office@centerforfoodsafety.org

centerforfoodsafety.org

these exposure routes can result from uses of neonicotinoid seed coatings, which is why we will continue to urge ConAgra to recognize these threats and make a strong commitment to phasing out uses of neonicotinoid seed coatings in Orville Redenbacher's supply chain. Furthermore, there is no public evidence that new seed coating lubricants provide significant reductions in overall risks to bees. If you are aware of evidence to the contrary, please do provide us with it.

Thank you for your response on this critical issue. I look forward to speaking with you soon and hope that ConAgra will make a strong commitment to phase out uses of neonicotinoid seed coatings in Orville Redenbacher's supply chain. Our members have been very supportive of Pop Secret and Pop Weaver, and I am sure they would be just as supportive of ConAgra if you were to make an equally strong commitment for Orville Redenbacher and your other popcorn brands. We would like the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how you might implement such a commitment.

Sincerely,



Larissa Walker
Pollinator Program Director
660 Pennsylvania Ave. SE, Suite 302
Washington, DC 20003
(P): 202.547.9359 | (F): 202.547.9429

¹ Statements available at: <http://www.popweaver.com/news/2015-10-21Neonics%20Statement.pdf>; and http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/files/diamondstatement_popsecretemail_65258.pdf