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London, 30 January 2013

Mr David Heath MP  
Minister of State for Agriculture and Food  
Defra  
Nobel House, 17 Smith Square  
London -- SW1P 3JR

Dear Minister David Heath

I'm writing to bring your attention to a petition urging you to support a European ban on neonicotinoid pesticides. The petition has been coordinated by the global campaigning group Avaaz.org, and published in 14 languages. It has been signed by nearly two million people from across the world -- over 190,000 in the UK. The text of the petition reads:

"To EU decision-makers:

*We call on you to immediately ban the use of neonicotinoid pesticides until and unless new independent scientific studies prove they are safe. The catastrophic demise of bee colonies could put our whole food chain in danger. If you act urgently with precaution now, we could save bees from extinction."*

In the past few years we have seen a steep and disturbing global decline in bee populations -- many bee species are already extinct and some member states have reported mortality rates between 40%-50%. The Status and Trends of European Pollinators, or STEP programme, says bees and other pollinating insects are vital to the production of 84% of Europe's crops, including fruits, vegetables and herbs.

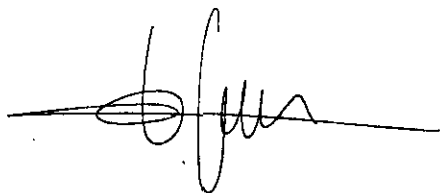
Following the publication of the European Food Safety Agency's bees report on January 6th, we've seen the most compelling evidence to date that the decline of bee populations is linked to the use of neonicotinoid pesticides. The EFSA's study casts serious doubt over the regulation and continued use of neonicotinoid pesticides, and we note that several countries -- such as France and Italy -- have already moved to place bans on some members of the pesticide family, and have already seen results.

However, partial and patchy bans will not be enough to save bees -- we need swift, cooperative action across the entire European Union to remove these toxic chemicals from the market. We understand major chemical corporations are trying to discredit the report, and pressure governments to resist action, however, citizens are coming together to now to appeal to governments to put the precautionary principle before corporate profit.

As representatives from your government meet in Brussels with key decision makers from the European Commission, we hope you will take into consideration, the views of these two million people who want decisive action to remove bee poisons from the market. We can no longer leave our delicate food chain in the hands of research run by the chemical companies. Banning these pesticides will move us closer to a world safe for ourselves and the other species we care about and depend on.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, I look forward to your prompt response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luis Morago', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Luis Morago, Campaigns Director, Avaaz.org

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**AVAAZ.ORG**  
THE WORLD IN ACTION

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*Avaaz.org is a 17 million-person global campaign network that works to ensure that the views and values of the world's people shape global decision-making. ("Avaaz" means "voice" or "song" in many languages.) Avaaz members live in every nation of the world; our team is spread across 13 countries on 4 continents and operates in 14 languages.*