



## NEWS RELEASE

### **Straight Talk about the Value of Neonics**

*Growers and other agricultural professionals talk about the value neonicotinoids bring to their crops and communities, and worry what the loss of these tools would mean for agriculture*

(October 28, 2014) – In a series of eight facilitated regional listening sessions across the United States and Canada, growers and other agricultural professionals discussed the importance of neonicotinoid insecticides to their operations and expressed deep concerns about what the loss of these valuable tools would mean to their business and their communities. Panelists were worried about the pest management challenges they would face, as well as increased worker exposure and environmental concerns if neonicotinoids were no longer available.

The eight listening sessions were conducted in Lake Alfred, Fla.; Memphis, Tenn.; Prosser, Wash.; San Diego, Calif.; *Chicago, Illinois; Davenport, Iowa; Regina, Saskatchewan; and London, Ontario.* Crops represented included corn, soybeans, wheat, cotton, canola, rice, dry beans, peas, potatoes, citrus, tree fruits, grapes, tomatoes and other vegetables. Participants were not selected or excluded based on their use of neonicotinoids. In fact, several participants were responsible for organic production within their overall operation.

AgInfomatics, a firm consisting of independent agricultural economists and scientists, conducted the sessions between November 2013 and March 2014, to better understand the perspective of growers and agricultural advisors regarding the use and impact of neonicotinoids over a range of different crops. The sessions were moderated by Dr. Fran Pierce, professor emeritus and former director of the Center for Precision Agricultural Systems at Washington State University, and Dr. Pete Nowak, principal of AgInfomatics and professor emeritus of environmental studies at University of Wisconsin-Madison.

More than 70 panelists participated in the listening sessions. All commented on how neonicotinoids have improved their pest management and operational efficiency. Growers appreciated the precision and effectiveness of these products, while noting their ease of use and relative safety to people, wildlife and beneficial insects. One panelist stated that while it may be counter-intuitive to those who don't work in agriculture, the use of neonicotinoids "reduces our total output of insecticides and the impact that we have on the environment."

Posed with a hypothetical loss of neonicotinoids, panelists expressed deep concerns that such an event would result in less effective pest management, higher operating costs, more frequent spraying, and greater risks to workers and the environment. Many fear relying on older chemicals would result in a return of pests that have long been under control and prompt a rapid rise in pest resistance. As one grower said, "Neonicotinoids fit into a rotation of products that allows us to avoid development of resistance in the pest populations that we're targeting."

Some panelists noted a loss of neonicotinoids would not only have a devastating impact on their operations, but also on the economic vitality of their communities. One panelist observed that being unable to produce high-quality fresh market tomatoes would have a crippling effect to local businesses and people by “threatening the total viability of an industry that has a value of about three-quarters of a billion dollars a year and employs 20,000 or 30,000 workers.”

Many panelists expressed frustration that emotion, rather than science, dominates the discussion about neonicotinoids and pollinators. Acknowledging that many pesticides can affect bees, panelists also noted that experts point to a complex array of factors associated with pollinator health. Farmers are sensitive to this issue. Many described a positive and long-term working relationship with their local beekeepers, even when they derive no economic benefit from the hives that are placed around their fields.

### **Report Reference**

#### ***The Value of Neonicotinoid Insecticides in North American Agriculture: Summary of Grower and Agri-Professional Perspectives from Regional Listening Sessions in the United States and Canada***

*This report is one in a series that will be released over the next few months as part of a comprehensive evaluation of the economic and societal benefits of neonicotinoid insecticides in North America. The research was conducted by AgInfomatics, a consulting firm of independent agricultural economists and scientists, and jointly commissioned and sponsored by Bayer CropScience, Syngenta and Valent U.S.A.*

*All reports will be published online beginning October 28 at: [www.GrowingMatters.org](http://www.GrowingMatters.org).*

### **About Growing Matters**

Growing Matters is a coalition of organizations and individuals committed to scientific discourse on the stewardship, benefits and alternatives of neonicotinoid insecticides in North America. [Bayer CropScience](http://www.BayerCropScience.com), [Syngenta](http://www.Syngenta.com) and [Valent U.S.A. Corporation](http://www.ValentUSA.com) are leading this coalition with support from Mitsui Chemicals Agro, Inc.

Agriculture and horticulture are key to nourishing families and communities. Feeding a growing population, enhancing the beauty of our surroundings, and sustaining a commitment to environmental protection are fundamental needs that matter. Crop protection products, both natural and synthetic, are important tools that protect plants from tough and invasive pests that can devastate crops and urban landscapes.

Go to [www.GrowingMatters.org](http://www.GrowingMatters.org) for the latest information, reports, videos and infographics on the benefits of neonicotinoid insecticides or to show your support.