

Viewpoint: Phase out neonicotinoids? Walmart's new farmer mandates promote alarmist misinformation about bee health

Walmart is making two big asks from its producers. First, it's encouraging fresh produce suppliers to "protect, restore, or establish pollinator habitats by 2025 on at least 3% of land they own... and report annual progress." It's also requiring its producers to develop an Integrated Pest Management system certified by a third-party. And they're encouraging suppliers to phase out certain neonicotinoids pesticides.

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Here's the problem: the media's [narrative on bee-pocalypse](#) is overblown and wrong. It's true some wild bee species were added to the endangered species list over the last decade. But honey bees were never endangered. Yes, we saw some population declines in the early 2000s due to Colony Collapse Disorder. But CCD ended abruptly in 2011, and there was no evidence pesticides caused it. (Although there was evidence that the varroa mite played a big role.) Since then, honey-bee [populations have rebounded](#) to decade highs.

But some activist groups [used CCD and a renewed concern over bees](#) as an opportunity. They've tried to demonize the neonic pesticides they so desperately want to ban, despite [no convincing evidence](#) connecting these crop-protection tools to bee deaths.

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What I have a problem with is Walmart placing the blame on farmers without any evidence that this new initiative is anything but fruitless.

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