

## New York neonicotinoid compromise: Governor Hochul agrees to gradually phase out some neonicotinoid pesticides while allowing key exceptions

**G**overnor Kathy Hochul has signed into law Legislation S.1856-A/A.7640, known as the Birds and Bees Protection Act. This nation-leading legislation protects New Yorkers from potentially harmful toxins by prohibiting the use of certain neonicotinoid pesticide (neonics) treated corn, soybean, or wheat seeds and neonicotinoid pesticides for outdoor ornamental plants and turfs, creating important protections for New York's pollinators, birds, and other wildlife.

"By signing the Birds and Bees Protection Act, New York is taking a significant stride in protecting our kids, environment and essential pollinators," **Governor Hochul said**. "This law underscores our commitment to fostering a thriving ecosystem while we prioritize sustainable farming and agricultural practices."

Legislation S.1856-A/A.7640 is a proactive measure to protect pollinators by restricting the use of neonicotinoid pesticides on certain seeds, outdoor ornamental plants, and turf. It allows sufficient time for innovative research on alternatives and the development of more cost-effective products that are less harmful to the environment. After this period, the use of neonicotinoids will be subject to science-based evaluations and waiver provisions to assist farm and agriculture operations in the transition to this new program.

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**State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal said**, "The EPA recently found that neonicotinoid pesticides are driving more than 200 species towards extinction, marking them as the most ecologically destructive pesticides since DDT. I'm grateful that Governor Hochul has signed our Birds and Bees Protection Act (S1856A) with Assembly Member Glick, which will help end the pervasive use of toxic neonicotinoids. I'm also extremely thankful to the coalition of advocacy groups that helped get our bill across the finish line, including NRDC, the Sierra Club, NYLCV and environmental advocates, as well as my Senate colleagues, Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, and Pete Harckham, Chair of the Environmental Conservation Committee."

**Assemblymember Deborah Glick said**, "Limiting toxins that pose adverse effects and health risks is an essential step forward to stop poisoning the environment and create a healthier New York. I applaud Governor Hochul for recognizing the importance of our pollinators and our environment and signing the Birds and Bees Protection Act. This bill accommodates concerns about seed supplies while ensuring transparency and agronomic justification through a waiver process overseen by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation in consultation with the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets with time built in for the market and farmers to adjust. This groundbreaking legislation will help safeguard the vitality of our pollinators while ensuring a healthier environment for all New Yorkers."

New York is committed to promoting the health and recovery of pollinator populations, as highlighted in the State's Pollinator Protection Plan ([PDF](#)). Pollinators contribute substantially to New York's environment and economy. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, pollinators provide approximately \$344 million worth of pollination services to New York and add \$29 billion in value to crop production nationally each year. The state's ability to produce crops such as apples, grapes, cherries, onions, pumpkins, and cauliflower relies heavily on the presence of pollinators.

This new law will build on action the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has already taken to restrict the use of many neonics and work with registrants to narrow the uses of many of these products to protect pollinators or state resources.

Last year, DEC took action to limit the unrestricted use of pesticides that can harm bee and other pollinator populations by reclassifying certain products containing the neonicotinoid (neonic) insecticides imidacloprid, thiamethoxam, and acetamiprid as "restricted use" to ensure applications are limited to trained pesticide applicators in specific situations.

Governor Hochul continues to prioritize agriculture and recognizes its critical importance to New York's economy and role in protecting the environment. The state is proud to be home to over 33,000 farms producing some of the world's best food and beverages. Governor Hochul's 2023 State of the State Address and New York State's Fiscal Year 2024 Budget included strong support and investments aimed at boosting demand for New York agricultural products, bolstering New York's food supply chain, and ensuring all New Yorkers can produce and access fresh, local foods.

**New York Farm Bureau President David Fisher said,** "New York Farm Bureau greatly appreciates Governor Hochul's leadership in offering thoughtful chapter amendments on the "Birds and Bees Protection Act." She sought input from all sides and reached consensus on a balanced approach that ensures farms will have safe risk management tools that they need to grow food for our state. New York Farm Bureau also is pleased about the continued role the Department of Environmental Conservation will have in consultation with the Department of Agriculture and Markets to make science based regulatory decisions. The Governor once again demonstrated her willingness to find a reasonable pathway forward to support New York agriculture."

**Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter Conservation Program Manager Caitlin Ferrante said,** "The Sierra Club applauds Governor Hochul for signing The Birds and Bees Protection Act into law. Using sound science as a backbone for the policies that protect NY's pollinators, water, and soil health will ensure NY's communities are safer for generations to come. We thank the Governor for her nation-leading action on this crucial bill. The Sierra Club also thanks bill sponsors Assemblymember Glick and Senator Hoylman-Sigal, as well as the leadership of Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Speaker Heastie, Assemblymember Solages and Senator Harckham in ensuring these bills passed through both houses in the NYS Legislature."

**Natural Resource Defense Council Pollinator Initiative Acting Director Dan Raichel said,** "Governor Hochul and the legislature have taken a critical step forward in protecting New York's food systems,

ecosystems, and public health by signing this first-in-the-nation bill. Neonics harm nearly every part of our environment—from the water to the soil to our health—and kill bees and other pollinators, driving down crop production. With the sensible and flexible model outlined in the bill, New York will now lead the country in commonsense regulation to curb the use of these dangerous pesticides.”

**New York Corn and Soybean Growers Association Vice President Brad Macauley said,** “On a very complicated and consequential issue, Governor Hochul showed great leadership in protecting the agricultural industry while advancing environmental policy. Our association believes strongly in our role as stewards of the environment and following science backed policy. Governor Hochul struck the right balance for our industry and we look forward to continuing to work with the Administration on the implementation of the new law to properly protect both our environment and industry.”

**Citizens Campaign for the Environment Executive Director Adrienne Esposito said,** “We are thrilled and buzzing with excitement! This legislation will leave a legacy of cleaner, safer drinking water and saves our pollinators so that they can continue to pollinate 75 percent of the fruit, nuts and vegetables we eat. As we enjoy a holiday meal which may include pasta, green beans or fruit pies we should thank the bees for their role in providing our food and now we can thank Governor Hochul for her terrific support in signing this bill. Saving the bees is a holiday gift for all New Yorkers.”

**National Audubon Society Senior Policy Manager Erin McGrath said,** “Over the last decade, neonics have come under increasing scrutiny because of their negative impacts on birds, pollinators, other wildlife, and people. Science has shown us that even low doses of neonics can prevent songbirds from orienting themselves for their migration, cause significant weight loss, and interfere with their reproductive success. Due to these impacts, the use of neonicotinoid insecticides should be greatly reduced to help reverse the steep declines observed in many bird populations. We thank Governor Hochul for taking swift action to curtail the unrestricted use of neonic pesticides and championing birds and the places they need to survive.”

**Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York (NOFA-NY) Policy Manager Katie Baildon said,** “By signing the Birds and Bees Protection Act Governor Hochul is protecting human and ecosystem health and supporting the viability of the thousands of NY farms that rely on native and honeybee populations to pollinate their crops each year. By restricting wasteful neonic use, NY is protecting not only pollinators but also insect predators that farmers count on for natural pest control and soil microbial life critical for capturing carbon and nutrient cycling. NOFA-NY is celebrating this important win that will significantly curb contamination of our environment, our bodies and the entire NY food system.”

**New York League of Conservation Voters President Julie Tighe said,** “Sweeter than a honeybee: thank you to Governor Hochul for signing the Birds and Bees Protection Act into law! By eliminating unnecessary and harmful chemicals in our treatment of pests, this measure will help ensure the survival of our essential pollinators and in doing so protect New York’s environment, food security, and agricultural economy.”

**Clean+Healthy Executive Director Bobbi Wilding said,** “We thank Governor Hochul for signing the Birds and Bees Protection Act into law. By eliminating the use of the neonicotinoid pesticides, our

pollinators, wildlife, environment, and people's health will not be unnecessarily vulnerable to the harmful impacts of the toxic neonicotinoid pesticides."

**Physicians for Social Responsibility President and Pediatrician Kathleen Nolan said,** "By signing the Birds and Bees Act, Governor Kathy Hochul has written her name alongside that of Rachel Carson as a defender of birds, bees, butterflies, and all forms of pollinators and pollinator-dependent wildlife. Families in New York will now drink cleaner water and eat healthier foods, with greatly decreased exposure to dangerous nicotine-like chemicals, and farmers can turn to more sustainable practices that promote soil health and provide us all with abundant and nourishing foods."

**Adirondack Council Executive Director Raul J. Aguirre said,** "The Adirondack Council applauds Governor Hochul for signing the Birds and Bees Protection Act. The Birds and Bees Protection Act uses the best available science to protect our pollinators, human health, and the future of New York farming. We are grateful for the Governor's environmental leadership and to the bill's sponsors for championing this vital piece of legislation."

**Good Farmers Guild of Western New York President and Farmer and Co-owner of Dirt Rich Farm Laura Colligan said,** "As a vegetable farmer, a wide range of beneficial insects and other bugs are essential to my success, whether it's bees to pollinate my crops, lacewings to control pests, or earthworms to return nutrients to the soil. Neonicotinoid pollution threatens all of them and, by extension, my livelihood. I'm grateful for Governor Hochul's leadership on this critical legislation to protect farmers like me across New York State from needless neonicotinoid use."

**Plan Bee Farm Brewery Owner Emily Ann Watson said,** "We depend on our honeybees and clean water for our farm and brewery. I can control what we use on our farm, but hive collapse and the threat of creeping contamination are a continuous problem. I'm so glad the Governor and the legislature made the right decision today to take smart action to eliminate wasteful and destructive neonic use."

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