

THE PROBLEM

Neonicotinoid insecticides or “neonics”—the most widely used insecticides in the US—have been linked to massive losses of bees and other pollinators in decades of peer-reviewed studies, despite industry efforts to downplay their leading role. Science also ties neuro-toxic neonics to declining bird species, dramatic losses of aquatic insect and fish populations, and human health harms, especially in children.

Much of the neonic use in Connecticut, such as aesthetic applications on lawns and golf courses and use on pesticide coated seeds, is wasteful and could be replaced with better alternatives. Almost all corn and soy and half of all wheat seeds are now coated in neonics preventatively, whether the emerging seedling will face insect pests or not.

The Department of Agriculture does not track what corn sold in CT is grown from neonic-coated seeds because, thanks to a legal loophole, EPA does not categorize pesticides on seeds as pesticides.

We do know that over 800 million corn seeds are planted each year and virtually all (except organic seeds) **are coated with neonics.** This huge non-regulated “escape” of a toxic pesticide poses severe risks to whole ecosystems and human health. 5% of neonic seed coatings are taken up into the plant as it grows, while 95% moves through soil and into streams and groundwater. This huge non-regulated “escape” of a toxic pesticide poses severe risks to whole ecosystems and human health. 5% of neonic seed coatings are taken up into the plant as it grows, while 95% moves through soil and into streams and groundwater.

A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION

Connecticut has been a leader in setting neonic policy. In 2016 we passed the Pollinator Protection Act which classified Neonics as “restricted use” which means that only certified pesticide applicators can use them.

However, neonics are still being used in wasteful ways in dangerous quantities in Connecticut endangering bees, birds, soil, water, and human health. Further restricting the use of neonicotinoids for non-agricultural purposes and the use of certain treated seeds will be an asset to public health.

New York just passed a landmark law that accomplishes both goals, and New Jersey, Maine, and Nevada, have passed bills that bar most non-agricultural uses. Outdoor uses of neonics, including seeds, have been banned in parts of Canada since 2015 and the European Union since 2018.

USGS Studies Show Neonics in 50% of US Streams

They Are
Wiping Out
Aquatic
Insects
and the
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& Birds
that Eat
Them



MORE INFORMATION

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FAST FACTS

- ◆ A comprehensive 2020 study by Cornell University reports that using neonic-coated seeds offers “no overall net income benefits” to farmers or there are safer alternatives.
- ◆ Neonics work systemically making a plant’s pollen, fruit, and even the dew on its leaves contaminated.
- ◆ Half of all streams in the U.S. now contain neonics.
- ◆ The CDC found neonics in 50% of the population, with the highest concentrations found in children.
- ◆ Since neonics cannot be washed off, they are in drinking water and food. 89% of food samples collected in the US contained at least one neonic.
- ◆ A recent study of 171 pregnant women in the U.S. found that over 95% had neonics in their bodies.
- ◆ Human and animal research link them to potential neurological, developmental and reproductive harms, including malformations of the developing heart and brain and lowered sperm counts.
- ◆ Neonics have made U.S. agriculture 48-times more harmful to insects since their introduction in the mid-1990s.

- ◆ Scientific evidence links neonic use to massive bee and bird population loss. In CT, beekeepers now lose on average 47.2% of their colonies each year and some native bumblebee populations are down by as much as 99%. Eating just one neonic-treated seed is enough to kill a songbird, and even at low doses, neonics harm birds’ chances of survival.
- ◆ Data on surface water contamination show concentrations of several neonics high enough to be causing impacts in aquatic food chains, i.e. killing the insects that feed the fish, frogs, birds, and everything that eats them, hollowing out our ecosystems.

