



American Beekeeping Federation
480 Town Center St N, PMB #253
Mooresville, IN 46158-1379
Phone: 317-503-0583 abfnet.org@gmail.com

American Beekeeping Federation – 2024 Legislative/Regulatory Issues

-Farm Bill

I. The Emergency Livestock Assistance Program (ELAP)

The ELAP program administered by USDA is the sole disaster program available to U.S. beekeepers. Our industry does not have traditional commodity support programs or traditional RMA crop insurance programs to rely on in case of disastrous loss. ABF asks the Congress to reauthorize the ELAP program for honey bees. Beekeepers have been eligible for ELAP loss payments since the 2008 Farm Bill.

ABF supports the Thune-Lujan Livestock Disaster Assistance Improvement Act and supports the inclusion in the Farm Bill. The bill sets a statutory normal bee mortality rate at 15%. It also standardizes the ELAP payment amount and expands the eligibility of the program to include coverage for drought-related losses including costs for transportation of bees, feed and resulting honey crop loss.

ABF supports an exemption from the AGI limitation for farmers that receive 75% of their income from farming or related farming practices and support its inclusion in the Farm Bill.

II. Honey Integrity Issues in the Farm Bill on other Legislative vehicles

U.S. honey producers provide a fraction of the American consumer's demand for honey. The industry is in a constant state of vigilance with foreign honey producers to ensure that their imported product is safe and that its quality and origin are prominently identified and labeled, with "manufactured" or "synthetic" honey clearly labeled as such. We support all efforts during the farm bill negotiation to ensure a consistent federal Standard of Identity (SOI), a clear and easy to understand country of origin label requirement to greatly improve product traceability, transparency, and testing. ABF supports the efforts of Congressman Armstrong (R- ND) in

his efforts to introduce the HONEY Identification, Verification and Enforcement Act (HIVE Act).

III. ARS Honey Research Authorization

ABF supports the extension of the authorization of the USDA ARS honey bee research labs. The core of these research funds directed to the ARS bee labs in Beltsville, MD, Baton Rouge, LA, Tucson, AZ and Davis, CA. These labs are underfunded, and we are seeking a significant increase of \$9 million in FY2025, given the serious threat of emerging pests

IV. Honey bee Research Coordinator Position at Office of Chief Scientist, USDA

ABF supports the extension in the farm bill of the 2018 authorization of the USDA Honey bee and Pollinator Research Coordinator established in the 2018 farm bill and the funding necessary to support the functions of this office to all beekeepers and all pollinators.

V. Conservation Issues

Support direct funding for USDA projects where managed bees are part of the efforts toward reforestation and other USDA conservation and climate efforts throughout the Department. Improve the amount of pollinator friendly acreage included in FSA and NRCS conservation programs. Include in these efforts the Honey bee Health Coalition recommendation on seed mixes for CRP. Include honey bee recommendations in new regenerative farming funding /grants to support CRP funding for marginal lands & pollination plantings.

VI. APHIS Bio-Controls

Instruct APHIS to conduct a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) pursuant to NEPA on tallow mitigation before finalizing any permit decisions for biocontrol. Supportive language in FY 23 &24 Appropriations.

VII. Public Lands Access for Honey bees

ABF supports all action by the Congress to assist in improving the access to federal public lands (U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land

Management) to beekeepers by providing guidance to local federal land managers to approve multi-year beekeeper permits and to ensure honey bee access to federal public lands is prioritized.

VIII. Canadian Border and U.S Honey bees

Encourage the opening of the Canadian border to shipments of U.S. packaged bees (with agreed to protocols)

Fiscal Year 2025 Appropriations

I. Honey bee Research Funding at ARS

The beekeeping industry is seeking a \$9 million increase in funding for honey bee research at ARS/USDA research labs and cooperator labs in FY 2024. Specifically targeting research to prevent the introduction and control of the Tropilaelaps mites. The introduction of this mite to the U.S. and North America is the biggest threat to honey production and agricultural pollination our industry has faced in decades.

II. Honey bee Research Coordinator

Support funding the USDA Honey bee and Pollinator Research Coordinator position within the Office of the Chief Scientist at USDA at no less than \$500,000 to support the coordination of research activities across the Department of Agriculture and support establishing this position & funding in the USDA budget submission.

III. ELAP

Ensure ELAP reimbursements to beekeepers are market-based per hive are established and maintained. Restore the expected mortality rate to 15% or lower for the purposes of administering the program. (included in both FY22 and FY 23 Appropriations)

IV. APHIS

Instruct APHIS to conduct a full EIS on tallow mitigation efforts before finalizing agency decisions (highlighted in FY 23 Appropriations)

Other Legislative Issues of interest to ABF

I. DOL H-2A Regulations on Wage Rates

Support all efforts to ensure DOL labor rates for H-2A workers remain competitive to avoid a rapid reduction in honey production and pollination services that would result from a drastic increase in labor costs to honey producers. Support legislation to prevent current H-2A wage regulations.

II. House Ag Committee Task Force on Ag Labor

ABF supports the efforts by the Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee establishing a Bi-Partisan Committee Task Force on Agricultural Labor. ABF urges Congress to move forward on this recommendation made by the House Task Force.

III. Trade Legislation

ABF supports current efforts to reduce the trade of imported honey that does not meet established standards & certifications.

