


# The Australian

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## UN report says world's food stocks at risk as bee colonies dying out

- Ben Webster
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Chemicals found in modern pesticides may be killing bee colonies worldwide, a UN report says, and undermining efforts to feed the world's growing population.

Source: AP

**A MIXTURE of chemicals found in modern pesticides may be killing bee colonies around the world, according to a UN report.**

Seeds are being coated in systemic insecticides that spread throughout the plant, from the roots to the flowers and into the nectar and pollen.

The report says that the highly toxic chemicals in the insecticides, collectively known as neonicotinoids, can cause loss of the sense of direction and memory on which bees rely to find food.

The UN Environment Program (Unep) report says that when neonicotinoids are combined with certain fungicides, the toxicity becomes 1000 times stronger.

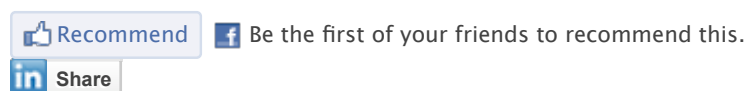
The report was ordered in response to the sudden disappearance of bees in many parts of the world. It says that the loss of nature's most important plant pollinators could undermine efforts to feed the world's growing population.

It concludes that multiple factors are likely to be behind the "colony collapse disorder", which has devastated bee populations in North America, China, Africa and parts of Europe.

Unep said air pollution might be interfering with bees' ability to find flowering plants.

Scents that could travel more than 800m in the 1800s now reach less than 200m from a plant. The destruction of habitats for wild flowers could also be contributing to the decline many regions.

The report calls on farmers to take greater care in the choice, timing and application of insecticides and other chemicals. It says that farmers and landowners should be offered higher incentives to restore bee-friendly habitats, such as setting aside strips of land for wild flowers next to crops.



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