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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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As EPA Approves Emergency Use of Bee-Killing Pesticide for Florida Citrus, Group Urges Heightened Efforts to Stop Toxic Pesticide Dependency

February 25, 2015, Washington, DC – Today, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) granted Florida citrus growers an emergency exemption to use the bee-killing pesticide clothianidin to control Asian Citrus Psyllid (ACP), a pest that causes “citrus greening,” a devastating citrus plant disease. Clothianidin, which is not currently registered for use on citrus, is part of a class of neurotoxic, systemic insecticides called neonicotinoids, which have been implicated in global honey bee declines and suspended in the European Union. “EPA needs to assist in stopping the deadly use of pesticides that harm bees, butterflies, and birds with sustainable practices, rather than imperil pollinators with its decisions,” said Jay Feldman, executive director of Beyond Pesticides, a health and environmental advocacy group. He continued, “We understand the immediate chemical needs of chemical-intensive agriculture for increasingly toxic and persistent chemicals, but urge EPA to help stop the treadmill, lest it allow irreversible harm to the environment, biodiversity, and human health.” Beyond Pesticides is urging EPA to require that growers adopt a management plan in order to apply clothianidin. “Ultimately, EPA should be requiring growers to adopt integrated organic systems to manage pests, as a part of an emergency permit,” said Mr. Feldman. Read [Beyond Pesticides' open letter response to EPA](#).

Honey bees in Florida, researchers say, contribute to the productivity of several groups of citrus fruit, including many orange and grapefruit varieties. Through their pollination services and foraging in citrus fruit, bees and other pollinators will be exposed to the contaminated pollen and nectar in the trees' flowers, as the systemic clothianidin translocates throughout the treated trees. Bees are exceedingly common in citrus groves, from which they produce a high quality honey crop.

According to the University of Florida, there are approximately 6,000 acres of certified organic citrus in Florida that does not permit the use of neonicotinoid pesticides, including clothianidin. Farm operations that are USDA certified organic avoid the use of toxic chemicals by implementing holistic management systems plans.

EPA issued the 2½ year emergency permit without subjecting its decision to any public comment. Beyond Pesticides is party to a lawsuit challenging EPA's failure to adequately review and restrict clothianidin.

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