

Date of Hearing: April 9, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Esmeralda Soria, Chair

AB 1042 (Ransom) – As Amended March 13, 2025

SUBJECT: Managed Honeybee Health Program

SUMMARY: This bill would establish the Managed Honeybee Health Program (MHHP) under the administration of the California Department of Food and Agricultural (CDFA), for the purpose of enhancing the health and well-being of managed honeybees in California that are necessary to support the ecological and economic viability of California agriculture. Specifically, *this bill*:

- 1) Makes legislative findings and declarations related to managed honeybees, their importance to California's agriculture and ecosystem; and, California needs to prioritize the health of managed honeybees through collaborative efforts, incentives, research and education, and the adoption of practices that support the sustainability of California's agricultural ecosystems.
- 2) Defines the following:
 - a) "Health intervention" means an intervention that improves the health status of managed honeybees, including, but not limited to, conservation management practices and other disease preventives, or a therapeutic or nutritional intervention.
 - b) "Managed honeybees" means honeybees and colonies kept and managed by humans, primarily for purposes of pollination, honey production, and the production of other hive products such as beeswax, propolis, and royal jelly.
 - c) "Program" means the MHHP established, as specified.
- 3) Allows CDFA to determine priorities for MHHP.
- 4) Allows CDFA, when awarding MHHP grants, to consider whether any of the following criteria apply to a project applicant or project:
 - a) The project is located in and benefits a disadvantaged community identified pursuant to Section 39711 of the Health and Safety Code.
 - b) The project applicant is a commercial beekeeper who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group, as defined in Section 512.
 - c) The project demonstrates potential for replication in other parts of the state.
 - d) The project provides environmental and agronomic co-benefits, such as reduced hive loss.
- 5) Requires CDFA to establish an advisory committee of up to six members appointed by the Secretary (secretary) of CDFA.

- a) Requires the advisory committee to comprise representatives of the office of the State Veterinarian, commercial beekeepers, county agricultural commissioners, farmers, academia, and the public.
 - b) Requires the secretary to determine the number of members that is necessary to assist the department with the administration of MHHP.
- 6) Requires CDFA to consult with the MHHP Advisory Committee on the development of program frameworks, guidelines, incentives, and technical assistance.
- 7) Creates The Managed Honeybee Health Account (MHHA) within CDFA.
- a) Allows CDFA to use MHHA funds, as specified.
 - b) Allows CDFA to collect non-state, federal, and private funds to be added to the MHHA.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Allows CDFA to expend all moneys made available for its use. *Food and Ag Code (FAC) 201*
- 2) Provides, under the Apiary Protection Act, for the regulation and management of apiaries, including regulations for bees used in the pollination of agricultural crops. *FAC 29001*

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: Honeybees play a crucial role in the production of many fruit, tree nut and vegetable crops, yet their natural habitats often do not coincide with the locations of agricultural crops that require pollination services. This creates a significant need for movement of managed honeybee colonies, especially during critical pollination periods. Increasing almond production in California has led to the creation of the largest market for pollination services in the world. Honeybees play an essential role in almond production because most almond varieties require cross-pollination with pollen from a different variety. Honeybees are also important to many other fruits and vegetables such as apples, cherries, prunes, blueberries, raspberries, peaches, plums, watermelons, cantaloupes, strawberries, citrus, cucumbers, pumpkins, squash, eggplant, and hot peppers.

California's almond industry alone requires approximately 90% of all commercial beehives in the U.S., with over 2.5 million beehives transported to the state each spring for pollination. Studies estimate that one-third of California's food supply depends on pollinators, generating nearly \$11 billion annually in economic value, at a minimum. Without managed pollinators, crop yields and quality would decline significantly, threatening both farmer livelihoods and the global food supply.

Recent reports have noted that bee mortality rates are at all-time high. Honeybees may be dying at an unprecedented rate this winter, with more than 1.1 million colonies lost, according to a survey of U.S. beekeepers by the nonprofit organization Project Apis m. Commercial beekeepers in California have reported an average loss of 62%, with a host of reasons, weather, pests, diseases, pathogens, nutrition, pest management, and bee theft. Similar loss of bees in Florida in 2023 resulted in nearly a \$4.28 billion reduction in the state's farm gate revenue. The impacts of

these losses leave commercial beekeepers at significant financial losses, who already operate on razor thin margins, and farmers that depend upon pollination experience significant losses, as well.

According to the author, California is one of the nation's top producers of crops like almonds, strawberries, and other fruits, all of which depend on pollinators to grow successfully. [This bill] is a crucial bill that helps protect these pollinators, like honeybees, from environmental threats, pests, and other challenges that have already led to the loss of 1.1 million managed beehives. This bill creates a program to support beekeepers in safeguarding their colonies, which is vital for ensuring that California's \$11 billion worth of crops continue to thrive with healthy honeybee populations.

Supporter state while there have been incentive programs developed and funded to help pollinators generally, to date, there is no state program specifically developed to help commercial beekeepers. This bill would establish the Managed Honeybee Health Program at the CDFA. Under the program, CDFA can administer grants, provide technical assistance, education, outreach and invest in research that assists the commercial beekeeping industry and by extension, the farm community that depends upon pollination services. Grants will be provided for health interventions that are intended to improve bee health—that could include planting bee friendly cover crop for forage, purchasing supplemental feed or water, rental assistance for beehive placement, purchasing hive health monitoring equipment or enrollment in trainings, purchasing probiotics, and assisting in pest and disease management. These practices can have both benefits for beekeepers and the broader ecosystem. An advisory committee consisting of beekeepers, the State Veterinarian, a County Agricultural Commissioner, and farmers will be assembled to assist in identifying practices and guiding the program.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Agricultural Council of California
Almond Alliance
American Pistachio Growers
California Chamber of Commerce
California Citrus Mutual
California Farm Bureau Federation
California Fresh Fruit Association
California State Beekeepers Association
Croplife America
Responsible Industry for A Sound Environment - Rise
Western Growers Association
Western Tree Nut Association

Opposition

None on file

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