When you support Extension, agriculture stakeholders adopt best management practices to protect pollinator populations.

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After adopting recommendations from Extension, Martin County Beekeepers average 2,000 pints of honey per year valued at $15,200. In addition, they collect data for National Aeronautics and Space Administration related to pollinator colonies.

Extension Contributed to the Development and Implementation of the Kentucky Pollinator Protection Plan

Extension professionals implement the Pollinator Protection Plan by teaching proper chemical use and application, developing pollinator habitats, and conducting environmental educational programs.
Bees, butterflies, moths and other insects are pollinators contributing to food production. Much of agriculture in Kentucky depends on or benefits from both managed and wild pollinators. However, pollinator populations have declined in recent years due to loss of habitat, invasive parasites, pesticides, and new honeybee diseases. Extension specialists worked with the Kentucky State Apiarist and more than twenty-five representatives of state and federal agencies, agricultural associations, non-profit organizations, and gardening groups to create the Kentucky Pollinator Protection Plan.

Each state was given the opportunity to develop their own pollinator protection plan tailored to their particular needs. Our Kentucky plan is voluntary and relies heavily on education and communication. The education effort and outreach is where Extension plays a critical role. While protection of honey bees is a major component, protection of wild pollinators including monarch butterflies is also addressed in the plan.

The goals of the plan address best management practices for beekeepers, pesticide applicators, gardeners, and land owners. The plan outlines strategies to increase pollinator habitats and foster improved communication between beekeepers and other agricultural producers. By 2020, Kentucky wants to slow the over wintering loss of pollinators from above 30% to the historical average of below 15%.

In 2017, Extension made over 21,000 contacts with information on bees and beekeeping. Extension conducted educational programs for beekeepers and constructed demonstration gardens and pollinator habitats for landowners and schools.

Extension professional reached over 6,000 people promoting integrated pest management. Over 500 Extension clients reported researching multiple options before selecting and applying pesticides. Eighty percent of those clients integrated a new cultural management tactic with current spray programs and more than 300 Extension clients reported using biological controls. Extension conducts Pesticide Application Trainings, which now include pollinator protection materials. Four thousand crop and livestock producers received certification in 2017. Seven hundred of the producers trained workers on work protection standards.

Pollinator protection is in the interest of all Kentuckians. While the plan was the result of representatives of many diverse groups and organizations working together for common interest, implementation requires cooperation of many different groups of clientele to succeed. Extension is the catalyst to advance pollinator protection.