

Pollinator actions weak, ECA report: The Commission's actions to protect declining wild pollinator populations have been weak, inconsistent & ineffective, according to a report published by the European Court of Auditors (ECA) this week (July 9). In a 57-page report* entitled 'Protection of wild pollinators in the EU-Commission initiatives have not borne fruit', the Luxembourg-based body finds that the decline is caused by "the increasing threat from human activity, in particular conversion to intensive agriculture & the use of pesticides & fertilisers." The audit covers the effectiveness of the Commission's approach, to contribute to legislative updates in the areas of biodiversity, agriculture & pesticides planned in 2021 to 2022. It looked at the effects of the Biodiversity Strategy to 2020, the Pollinators Initiative & safeguards for pollinators in the CAP. The auditors found the Commission's approach inconsistent, with gaps in key policies addressing the threats to pollinators. They concluded that "the Pollinators Initiative [launched on June 1, 2018] does not have the tools & mechanisms to address those gaps." They recommend that the Commission assess the need for specific measures as part of work on the future Biodiversity Strategy. Action to protect wild pollinators should be better integrated into EU policy instruments on biodiversity conservation & agriculture. They also want to see improved protection of wild pollinators in the pesticide risk assessment process. Samo Jereb, the ECA member responsible for the report, said that the decline in pollinators "should be seen as a major threat to our environment, agriculture & quality food supply." "The EU initiatives taken so far to protect wild pollinators have unfortunately been too weak to bear fruit," he added. In its response, published as part of the report, the Commission says that it considers the decline in wild pollinators to be the result of multiple drivers, inc. "land use change, intensive agricultural management including pesticide use, climate change, environmental pollution & invasive alien species." The EU's executive largely accepts the ECA recommendations, with a small caveat for the idea of studying the effect of the CAP on pollinators separately. It points out that the policy impact on them has already been analysed as part of work on the effect of the CAP on biodiversity & will also be looked at by a study on the Pollinators Initiative. By the end of 2020, the Commission will review progress & propose further action on the latter, if needed. Latest figures show that one in ten pollinating insects is on the verge of extinction, while a third of bee & butterfly species is declining.

*www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/DocItem.aspx?did=54200

EU's exec "schizophrenic" on pollinators, PAN: The ECA report on wild pollinators shows that the Commission's ambitions on the environment are being stifled by its desire to maintain an intensive model of agriculture, according to Pesticide Action Network (PAN) this week. In a statement issued on July 9, PAN Europe's Environment Policy Officer Martin Dermine, accused the EU's executive of a "schizophrenic attitude," contrasting money spent "to support farmers in planting flower strips or replant hedges along their fields as measures to help restore biodiversity," with "billions ... spent in the Common Agricultural Policy to support intensive agriculture, which is the main cause of the massive decline in bee populations." "We urgently need to reconcile agriculture & biodiversity," Dr. Dermine said, complaining that "the proposed reform of the CAP as well as the conservative approach of the Member States' Agricultural Ministries are negative signals for the future of our pollinators."