



## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

### **Apimondia announces Open Source License to enable the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Bee Genetic Resources**

**Rome, Italy, November 13, 2016:** The Beekeepers of the world organized in Apimondia have been collaborating to promote scientific, technical, ecological, social and economic apicultural development in all countries since 1895. The genetic resources of the honey bees used in beekeeping around the world are a result of generations of beekeepers working collaboratively in the associations represented by Apimondia.

The Executive Council of Apimondia meeting in Mugla, Turkey on Monday October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2016 unanimously voted to adopt the ***Apimondia Open Source Breeding Material (OSB) license for Apis mellifera und Apis cerana*** as a first step to implement an open source licensing system throughout the global beekeeping community.

“The past, present and future contributions of beekeepers in all regions of the world in conserving, improving and sharing the genetic resources of the honey bee can now be protected using a public license”, said Philip McCabe, President of Apimondia.

“In Germany, we already have the first organization of bee breeders, who have made a commitment to base all exchange of breeding material on the new license”, said Walter Haefeker, Coordinator of the Apimondia Working Group on GMOs and impact on the beekeeping sector. “Apimondia is calling on all beekeeping associations to implement this license to protect their collaborative efforts to maintain healthy bees for the beekeeping community and society as a whole.”

Apimondia is also supporting an international collaboration to establish honey bee germplasm repositories using state of the art technologies, which permit storing honey bee semen for a long time and perhaps indefinitely. Given present and future threats to honey bee survival, it is imperative to guarantee the preservation of the various types honey bees that exist worldwide, including both commercial genetic lines and locally adapted and wild types. The Apimondia license will be used to ensure free and open access to the genetic resources collected for the scientific and the beekeeping community.

The license and related documentation about how to implement it will be published on the Apimondia Web Site:

<http://www.apimondia.com>

### **Background**

In 2015 reports were published about the first genetically modified bees having been created at a University in Germany. This year, researchers from a University in Japan announced the production of Knockout Mutants by CRISPR/Cas9 in the European Honeybee. Furthermore, documents of the European Union about the regulation of

genetically modified insects contain a section on genetically modified honey bees including the concept of insecticide resistant bees.

During the 44<sup>th</sup> International Apimondia Congress Apimondia in Daejeon, Korea 2015 the Working Group 10 was tasked with drafting a public license intended to be used by the beekeeping community when exchanging honey bee genetic resources, which does reserve the rights of the beekeeping community to protect this common good from undue commercial exploitation or bio-piracy.

The beekeepers organized in Apimondia wish to put the scientific community and commercial enterprises on notice that this work has to be considered a creative commons and is the basis of Beekeepers' Rights.

Beekeepers are asserting the rights use, exchange and participate in decision-making regarding, and in the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from, the use of the genetic resources of the honey bee.

Beekeepers consider the genetic resources of the honey bee to be indigenous and the community of beekeepers to have the established right to grant access to them. Any use of the honey bee genetic resources of commercial purposes outside of the traditional scope of the beekeeping community has to ensure the beekeeping communities' prior informed consent, and fair and equitable benefit-sharing, keeping in mind established procedures as well as customary use and exchange.

Beekeepers' rights should be treated and promoted as an integral part of the human right to food, in that our future food supply, and its sustainability, depends on such rights (beekeepers') being firmly established.

The recognition of beekeepers' rights is a form of promoting the conservation of pollinator genetic resources and of traditional knowledge and of ensuring current and future food security. The recognition of beekeepers' rights would benefit not only the beekeepers themselves, but all of humanity.

Notwithstanding the assertion of rights to the intellectual property inherent in the genetic resources of the honey bee collaboratively created by the beekeeping community working together for over 100 years, the beekeepers of the world hereby reject the very concept of patents on life and intend to vigorously fight any attempt to patent all or part of the genetic resources of the honey bee.

\*\* This initiative is based on the concepts of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, which was ratified in Brazil in 2008 and Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization (ABS) to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

\*\* The concept is based on work published by Kotschi, J. and Rapf, K. (2016): Liberating seeds with an Open Source Seed (OSS) Licence. Working Paper. AGRECOL. Guggenhausen. We are grateful for the invaluable input on the subject of open source licensing of genetic resources.

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