

November 10, 2015

Craig Menear, CEO  
Home Depot  
2455 Paces Ferry Rd SE  
Atlanta, GA 30339

Dear Mr. Menear,

On behalf of Friends of the Earth and a growing number of environmental, beekeeper, farmworker and consumer groups representing millions of members and supporters, we are writing to follow up on our ongoing correspondence and dialogue with Home Depot regarding its sale of products and plants that contain bee-toxic neonicotinoid pesticides.

**We urge Home Depot to strengthen its stated commitment to protecting bees and other pollinators and nursery workers by immediately disclosing the progress it has made to date in phasing out neonicotinoid pesticides in all of its plants and off-the-shelf products and publicly committing to complete its phase-out of neonicotinoids in all plants and off-the-shelf products, while transitioning to least-toxic alternatives that are benign to human health and the environment, by December 2016.**

In August 2013, Friends of the Earth, Pesticide Research Institute and allies released [Gardeners Beware: Bee-toxic pesticides found in "bee-friendly" plants sold at garden centers nationwide](#), and sent [letters](#) asking Home Depot and other top retailers to stop selling neonicotinoids and plants pre-treated with these pesticides. Our first-of-its-kind pilot study and a [follow-up study](#) released in June 2014 found that more than half of the garden plants purchased at Home Depot and other major retailers in cities across the United States and Canada contained neonicotinoid pesticides at levels that have the potential to harm or kill bees. The day after the release of our 2014 study, Home Depot publicly announced that it would require its suppliers to start labeling any plants treated with neonicotinoids by the fourth quarter of 2014.

Since making this statement more than a year ago, Home Depot has had more than ample time to make a public, time-bound commitment to eliminate bee-toxic pesticides. Meanwhile, scientific evidence has continued to mount that neonicotinoids are a major contributor to both wild bee and honey bee declines and that they are [contaminating the environment](#), [harming a variety of other organisms](#) essential to healthy ecosystems and sustainable food production.

Based on our communications with the company to date, it has been our understanding that Home Depot chose to label plants as an interim step to increase transparency as it looked to phase out use of neonicotinoids in its live goods. It is also our understanding — based on statements made by a Home Depot representative at a [public event](#) at the University of California-Davis in September 2015 — that Home Depot has already worked with its suppliers to reduce by 76 percent the percentage of its garden plants treated with neonicotinoids; and that in some categories, including vegetables and herbs, the percentage of plants no longer treated with neonicotinoids has reached more than 95 percent. This is fantastic progress — but Home Depot has not, to our knowledge, shared this information in writing on its website or via other publicly accessible sources.

In addition, while we appreciate Home Depot's desire to increase transparency around the presence of neonicotinoids in its plants, the language on the labels your company has required suppliers to use to

disclose the presence of these pesticides promotes the use of neonicotinoids without mentioning their toxicity to bees and their persistence in the environment. The label also states that “these pesticides are approved by the EPA” while omitting that they are on the market under conditional registration and that EPA is currently reviewing them to determine if they are safe. It is imperative that the labels are clear and easy for consumers to understand, and that they convey that neonicotinoids have been found to be toxic to bees.

Despite repeated requests by Friends of the Earth and allies that Home Depot correct its misleading labels and publicly commit to phase out neonicotinoids on all of its off-the-shelf products and plants, your company has thus far refused to meet these requests.

Given the progress Home Depot has reportedly made to date in phasing out the use of neonicotinoids in its nursery plants — and given that many of Home Depot’s competitors as well as plant [wholesalers and nurseries](#) have already made [public commitments to phase out the use of neonics](#) — Home Depot’s continued delays in making further public commitments make us wonder if your company is giving more weight to pesticide industry interests than to the concerns of your customers and the strong body of independent science demonstrating that neonicotinoids are harmful to bees.

As a top company dedicated to meeting growing consumer demand for environmentally friendly garden products, we urge Home Depot to make a public commitment to the following:

- **Immediately disclose the percentage of Home Depot’s nursery plant offerings that are no longer treated with neonicotinoids and any progress made in removing on-the-shelf neonicotinoid products from stores;**
- **Completely phase out use of neonicotinoids in all plants and off-the-shelf products, while transitioning to least-toxic alternatives that are benign to human health and the environment, by December 2016;**
- **Offer third-party certified organic starts and plants; and**
- **Educate your customers on why your company has decided to take these steps to protect bees and other pollinators.**

Such actions would demonstrate Home Depot’s commitment to sustainability and protecting declining bee populations upon which our food supply and healthy ecosystems depend. We believe your customers would react positively, given the concern in the public for the plight of bees and farmworkers and the growing demand for sustainable and organic gardening products.

We ask that Home Depot respond to our letter and our request for the above commitments by November 20, 2015. If Home Depot chooses to not make this important set of public, time-bound commitments to help protect bees and other pollinators, the signatories to this letter will be re-launching a public campaign in December. Please contact Lisa Archer, Food and Technology Program at Friends of the Earth ([beeaction@foe.org](mailto:beeaction@foe.org) or 510-900-3145) if you have questions or would like to discuss this issue further.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Lisa Archer  
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Friends of the Earth U.S.

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CEO and Executive Director  
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