

February 23, 2016

John Hartmann, CEO
True Value 8600 W
Bryn Mawr Ave
Chicago, IL 60631

Dear Mr. Hartmann,

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 June 2015 and September 9 letters to True Value regarding its sale of products and plants that contain bee-toxic neonicotinoid pesticides.

We urge True Value to strengthen its stated willingness to protecting bees and other pollinators and nursery workers by immediately making a full fledged, time bound commitment to stop selling all off-the-shelf products and plants that contain neonicotinoid pesticides, 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 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 major retailers in cities across the United States and Canada contained neonicotinoid pesticides at levels that have the potential to harm or kill bees.

In the past year, thousands of your company's customers have signed petitions and made calls to True Value stores requesting your company take important steps to protect pollinators and the planet. In November, we delivered more than 400,000 petition signatures to True Value's corporate headquarters from customers across the country urging True Value to make this shift. To date, True Value has only said it is willing to move away from using these products by 2019. However, True Value has not made clear time-bound public commitments with a timeline or benchmarks to phase-out products and plants that contain these chemicals, nor agreed to a meeting with our organization to discuss this issue as its competitors have done.

As a top company dedicated to meeting growing consumer demand for environmentally friendly garden products, removing bee-toxic and bird-harming pesticides from your shelves would demonstrate your company's sustainability leadership and ensure that home gardeners across the country can trust True Value as a provider of *truly* "bee-friendly" plants and products. In the meantime, our growing coalition is educating and activating the public to take action on this issue because we are all extremely concerned about True Value's failure to address our concerns.

Since your company made its statement, Home Depot, the world's largest home-improvement chain, announced that it has removed neonicotinoid pesticides from 80 percent of its flowering plants and that it will complete its phase-out in plants by 2018. This announcement follows an ongoing campaign by Friends of the Earth and allies urging Home Depot to stop selling plants treated with neonicotinoids and remove neonic pesticides from store shelves.

Additionally, Lowe's, the second largest home improvement retailer in the country, agreed to eliminate neonicotinoid pesticides on all plants and off-the-shelf products by spring 2019, redoubling pesticide management efforts with the addition of an application reduction plan with plant suppliers including encouraging growers to use biological control programs, increased focus on consumer education initiatives, increase funding of pollinator gardens and include disclosure of these efforts in its Corporate Social Responsibility Report.

True Value stores in states including Washington, Oregon, Minnesota and Illinois have already committed to eliminate these pesticides from their stores on plants and off the shelf products—so it is clearly possible for this shift to occur across your company.

Given that a growing number of True Value's own stores and competitors as well as plant wholesalers and nurseries have already made public commitments to phase out the use of neonics, True Value's continued delays in making clear time-bound company-wide public makes us wonder if True Value is giving more weight to pesticide industry interests than your to the concerns of your company's customers and the strong body of independent science demonstrating that neonicotinoids are harmful to bees.

According to *Greenhouse Grower's 2016 State Of The Industry Survey*, in which 255 growers responded, a large number of growers are eliminating the use of neonicotinoids in production this year (64% overall), led mostly by small growers (69%), followed by large growers (57%) and medium-sized growers (56%). Based on Home Depot's latest announcement, this number is likely significantly higher and leads us to question why True Value is unwilling to make a commitment that would allow the company to align itself with the rest of the industry. We believe waiting until 2019 is too long to wait to eliminate these products and we urge True Value to go further than its competitors and eliminate these products by December 2016.

Due to the changing market and availability for plants and products that do not contain neonicotinoid pesticides, this week thousands of your company's customers are pledging to not shop at True Value until it makes a clear time-bound public commitment like its competitors to eliminate these pesticides in plants and products from store shelves.

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

- **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 and encourage growers to use alternative methods such as biological controls by December 2016;**
- **Offer third-party certified organic starts and plants; and**
- **Educate customers on why your company has decided to take these steps to protect bees and other pollinators.**

Such actions would demonstrate True Value's commitment to sustainability and protecting declining bee populations upon which our food supply and healthy ecosystems depend. We believe 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 True Value respond to our letter and, request for the above commitments and set-up a meeting to discuss these commitments by March 8, 2016. Please contact Tiffany Finck-Haynes, Food and Technology Program at Friends of the Earth (beeaction@foe.org or 202-222-0715) if you have questions.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Lisa Archer
Director, Food and Technology Program
Friends of the Earth U.S.

Cleo P. Braver
Cottingham Farm LLC
Eastern Shore Food Hub Corp.

Cynthia Palmer
Director, Pesticides Science and Regulation
American Bird Conservancy

Melissa Sargent
Environmental Health Educator
Ecology Center

Andrew Behar
CEO
As You Sow

Margie Alt
Executive Director
Environment America

David Wheeler
Co-Director
Bee Safe Boulder

Elizabeth Ouzts
Regional Program Director
Environment Arizona

Jay Feldman
Executive Director
Beyond Pesticides

Dan Jacobson
Executive Director
Environment California

Jeff Anderson
Owner
California Minnesota Honey Farms

Kim Stevens
Campaign Director
Environment Colorado

Lori Ann Burd
Environmental Health Director
Center for Biological Diversity

Chris Phelps
Director
Environment Connecticut

Caroline Cox
Research Director
Center for Environmental Health

Jennifer Rubiello
State Director
Environment Florida

Bonnie Raindrop
Legislative Director
Central Maryland Beekeepers Association

Jennette Gayer
Directpr
Environment Georgia

Evan Thalenberg
President
Chesapeake BaySavers

Shelley Vinyard
Regional Program Director
Environment Illinois

Shelley Vinyard
Regional Program Director
Environment Iowa

Taryn Hallweaver
Director
Environment Maine

Christy Leavitt
Regional Program Director
Environment Maryland

Ben Hellerstein
Campaign Director
Environment Massachusetts

Shelley Vinyard
Regional Program Director
Environment Michigan

Anna Aurilio
Director
Environment Minnesota

Rob Sargent
Energy Program Director
Environment Missouri

Christy Leavitt
Federal Field Director
Environment Montana

John Rumpler
Senior Environmental Attorney
Environment Nevada

Madeline Page
Global Warming Outreach Director
Environment New Hampshire

Doug O'Malley
Executive Director
Environment New Jersey

Sanders Moore
Director
Environment New Mexico

Heather Leibowitz
Director
Environment New York

Dave Rogers
State Director
Environment North Carolina

Rob Sargent
Energy Program Director
Environment Ohio

Rikki Seguin
Director
Environment Oregon

David Masur
Regional Director
Environment Rhode Island

Luke Metzger
Director
Environment Texas

Sarah Bucci
Campaign Director
Environment Virginia

Cecile Gernez
Solar Organizer
Environment Washington

Jeannie Economos
Pesticide Safety and Environmental Health
Project Coordinator
Farmworker Association of Florida

Virginia Ruiz
Director of Occupational and Environmental
Health
Farmworker Justice

JoAnn Coates-Hunter
Education and Operations Director
Fox Haven Organic Farm & Learning Center

Beatrice Olivastri
CEO
Friends of the Earth Canada

Alisa Gravitz
President and CEO
Green America

Ruth Berlin, LCSW-C
Executive Director
Maryland Pesticide Network

Dr. Mercola
Mercola

Kim Leval
Executive Director
Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides

Rebecca Riley
Senior Attorney
Natural Resources Defense Council

David Masur
Executive Director
Penn Environment

Sue Anderson
Co-Chair
People and Pollinators Action Network

Judy Hatcher
Executive Director
Pesticide Action Network

Laurie Schneider & Marcie Forsberg
Co-Presidents
Pollinator Friendly Alliance

Erin Rupp
Executive Director
Pollinate Minnesota

Laurie Pyne
President
Olympia Beekeepers Association

Ronnie Cummins
Executive Director
Organic Consumers Association

Laurel Hopwood
Coordinator, Pollinator Protection Program
Sierra Club

Rosa Kouri
Campaigns Director
SumofUs

Sylvia Broude
Executive Director
Toxics Action Center

Preston Peck
Policy Advocate
Toxic Free North Carolina

Mark Emrich
Past president
Washington State Beekeepers Association

Shelley Vinyard
Regional Program Director
Wisconsin Environment