

Bee Facts

Why We Need Bees:

Nature's Tiny Workers Put Food on Our Tables

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Many people think of bees simply as a summertime nuisance. But these small and hard-working insects actually make it possible for many of your favorite foods to reach your table. From apples to almonds to the pumpkin in our pumpkin pies, we have bees to thank. Now, a condition known as Colony Collapse Disorder is causing bee populations to plummet, which means these foods are also at risk. In the United States alone, more than 25 percent of the managed honey bee population has disappeared since 1990.¹

Bees are one of a myriad of other animals, including birds, bats, beetles, and butterflies, called pollinators. Pollinators transfer pollen and seeds from one flower to another, fertilizing the plant so it can grow and produce food. Cross-pollination helps at least 30 percent of the world's crops and 90 percent of our wild plants to thrive.² Without bees to spread seeds, many plants—including food crops—would die off.

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Bees Keep Our Economy Humming

More than \$15 billion a year in U.S. crops are pollinated by bees, including apples, berries, cantaloupes, cucumbers, alfalfa, and almonds. U.S. honey bees also produce about \$150 million in honey annually. But fewer bees means the economy takes a hit: The global economic cost of bee decline, including lower crop yields and increased production costs, has been estimated at as high as \$5.7 billion per year.³ Keeping bee populations safe is critical for keeping American tables stocked with high-quality produce and our agriculture sector running smoothly.

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www.nrdc.org/policy

*Every third bite of food
you take, thank a bee
or other pollinator.*

adapted from E.O. Wilson,
Forgotten Pollinators, 1996