



Honey Bees Support Wisconsin's Agriculture Industry

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Editor's note: A photo of Secretary Randy Romanski can be found [here](#)

A commentary by Secretary Randy Romanski of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP)

MADISON, Wis. – It's no secret that the agriculture industry is full of a lot of hard work. Our state's producers, farm workers, and processors work hard year-round, day after day, to supply the food, fuel, and fiber that make up Wisconsin's \$104.8 billion agriculture industry. But there's another category of small-but-mighty workers that also help keep our agriculture industry thriving: the honey bee.

In 2022, Wisconsin ranked 11th in the nation for the production of honey. With approximately 53,000 honey producing hives in the state, we produced nearly 3 million pounds of this sticky-sweet substance, making Wisconsin honey an \$8.86 million industry. At DATCP, we are proud to work with beekeepers, and with the Wisconsin Honey Producers Association, to help protect our state's bees and market the delicious Wisconsin commodity.

But honey bees do much more than just produce a delicious product that we love to eat. They're pollinators that play an essential role in the growth of various produce crops in the state. Many of our favorite foods are partially or fully reliant on insect pollinators to produce fruit, including cranberries, apples, strawberries, and tomatoes, among others. Other pollinators, like flower flies, butterflies, and hummingbirds, also offer important contributions to crop and wildflower pollination.

Through state statutes, DATCP is tasked with overseeing the state's beekeeping industry and monitoring for the detection and eradication of honey bee pests and diseases. In addition, the department regulates the import of honey bees and beekeeping equipment into the state. Through the Pollinator Protection Plan DATCP first developed in 2016, the department also educates and empowers homeowners, gardeners, farmers, and pesticide applicators to do what they can to protect pollinators, our food supply, and our agricultural economy.

Brian Kuhn, Director of DATCP's Plant Industry Bureau recently stated, "DATCP staff work to promote honey bee health, from providing certificates to seasoned commercial beekeepers so they can transport their bees to other states for crop pollination to hobbyists just getting started who need advice. We also reach out to beekeepers from out-of-state seeking to bring bees to Wisconsin to ensure import requirements are met."

DATCP also supports the beekeeping industry by employing an Apiary Program Coordinator and two other inspectors devoted solely to the state's apiary industry and hobbyists. Apiary program staff provide free seasonal inspections, pest and disease diagnostic services, and educational outreach for over 250 honey producers and commercial pollinators each year. They also provide management recommendations for established pests like Varroa mites and diseases like European foulbrood. Staff collect honey bee samples each year as part of a national survey in an attempt to detect emerging threats to beekeepers, like *Tropilaelaps* mites.

DATCP is currently undergoing a national recruitment to fill the important role of Apiary Program Coordinator. Applicants are encouraged to apply by March 25. For more information about the position or to apply, visit [Wisc.Jobs](#).

Simply put, honey bees are an important element of Wisconsin agriculture, working alongside us to keep our flowering crops thriving. To find out more about how you can help protect

managed and wild pollinators, visit

https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/PollinatorProtection.aspx.

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