

DR. CAROLINE LUCAS

Green Party  
*for the South East of England*

Lord Rooker  
Minister for Sustainable Food and Farming and Animal Health  
DEFRA  
Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London SW1P 3JR

March 26<sup>th</sup> 2008

Dear Minister,

Beekeeping contributes £165 million per annum to the UK's economy and has an unquantifiable value in terms of the health of our ecological systems. So, I am shocked at the extent of the cuts made to DEFRA's research programme for bee diseases.

In 2005 I asked the European Commission to comment on cuts that would see a halving of Seasonal Bee Inspectors and proposals to make European Foul Brood a non-identifiable disease. I was concerned that DEFRA's approach would lead to an increase in the spread of bee diseases and a loss of colonies if diseases were not treated soon enough. The Commissioner underlined the EU's commitment to maintaining good animal disease surveillance and control and the crucial role that bees play in Europe's ecology and ecosystems. However, as you are aware, each member state has responsibility for supporting bee keepers and providing assistance to prevent bee diseases and pests.

Since then Varroa has had a huge negative impact on wild honey bee populations in the UK and other diseases, such as Colony Collapse Disorder, could spread from overseas and do further damage. I would argue, therefore, that previous funding cuts have failed to allow DEFRA to meet its responsibilities under EU law and that further cuts will only exacerbate the problem.

The British Beekeepers Association argues that a five year, £8 million pound, research programme is required and I would urge the government to make this vital investment in bee health.

I look forward to hearing back from you.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Lucas - Green Party MEP for South East England.