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**Beekeeping and agriculture, war or alliance?**

***The talk "Are bees in danger? ...let's talk about it with the experts" organized by Arptra brought to light the need for discussions to overcome mutual distrust and safeguard common interests.***

Farmers and beekeepers must talk to each other and come together to overcome mutual distrust and work together to make their activities complementary. This is the operational indication that emerged from the talk "Are bees in danger? …Let's talk about it with the experts" organized by the Apulian Regional Association of Technicians and Researchers in Agriculture (Arptra) as part of a series of meetings on food, agriculture and the environment that it hosted in the four days of Agrilevante. This meeting was enlivened by the dialogue/debate between Maria Donnaloia, agronomist, beekeeper and technician of the Apulian beekeepers regional association (Arap), and Vittorio Filì, president of Arptra.

Donnaloia prefaced that "Puglia has 650 beekeepers, managing about 17,000 beehives officially surveyed in the apian registry. 70% are hobbyists, with less than 10 hives, and produce honey for self-consumption and possibly a few others, or small producers, with no more than 30 hives, while 30% are beekeepers with more than 30 hives. Beekeeping, even in Puglia, is threatened not only by pests and pathogens, but sometimes also by the improper use of pesticides".

First of all, the use of herbicides causes a strong loss of floristic biodiversity. Moreover, the use of neonicotinoid insecticides such as imidacloprid, thiamethoxam and others in the presence of beehives positioned in cherry or citrus groves or elsewhere creates serious risks of poisoning. "The bees that come into contact with these insecticides suffer from disorders such as memory loss, changing habits, the inability to return to the hive, the depopulation of families, the loss of the microbiota, that is, the set ofmicroorganisms **⎼** bacteria, fungi, archaebacteria and protozoa ⎼ and thevirusesthat live and colonize the hive, with devastating effects on bees, which become more susceptible to diseases and fail to overcome health problems. The weakening caused by the poisoning is worsened, in the event of prolonged drought, by nutritional deficiencies, with significant deaths of bees".

Bees are indispensable for pollination of tree crops, so they are valuable to farmers, Filì argued. "Unfortunately, sometimes the environmental associations blame the farmers as a whole, accusing them unjustly. I believe it is necessary to talk to beekeepers, farmers and technicians to help each other, for example by creating a network to report the relocations of beehives. Farmers also care about the fate of the bees, very precious to them, and Arptra expresses this concern. Our attention to the environment is demonstrated by the meeting that preceded the one on the bees: "Collective agreement: innovation, best practices in organic, integrated and quality farming" with the participation of Nino Paparella, president of the Italian Organic Consortium".

 **Bari, 13 October 2019**