

Statement by HE Mr. Norbert Totschnig (Austria)

**Federal Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Climate and Environmental Protection,
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The adoption of the “International Initiative on Pollinators” by the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity in 2000 was a critical step for the protection of pollinators worldwide. It contributes immensely to raise the awareness on the importance of pollinators for the life-sustaining systems, ecosystem health and the economy.

Congratulation on this important initiative and happy anniversary!

Pollinators are critical for agriculture and food security as a significant share of our food supply depends on pollinators. Furthermore, pollinators are important for maintaining plant diversity, providing food for other wildlife species, and contributing to healthy soils and water cycles. The decline in pollinators is a worldwide phenomenon that has intensified in recent decades.

Also, Austria attaches great importance to the health of pollinators and has carried out a number of initiatives for protecting, monitoring and improving knowledge on pollinators:

- The Austrian National Biodiversity Strategy 2030+ contains the target to reverse trends in pollinator's loss by 2030 and sets forth measures to promote wild bee species. To implement this target and related measures also an action plan on insects has been developed which also addresses pollinators.
- The Austrian National Biodiversity Fund supports many measures and projects contributing to the protection and monitoring of pollinators and wild bee species.
- Equally numerous interventions are implemented in the frame of the Austrian Agri-Environmental Programme (ÖPUL) to promote structural diversity and the availability of flowers in the Austrian cultural landscape. These are important habitats for bees and pollinators in agricultural areas. Through targeted management, in 2024 a total of around 240,000 hectares – about 10% of Austria's agricultural land – were made available as biodiversity areas, fallow land, flowering strips, hedges, and solitary trees, providing food and habitats for pollinators.
- Through the support of initiatives such as the “Future Bee” project, also research into the causes of bee colony losses has been further, intensified examined.

Austria has also joined the voluntary international initiative “Promote Pollinators” (Coalition of the Willing on Pollination) several years ago.

Finally, we are aware that it needs continued efforts for the protection of pollinators and therefore committed to consequently follow this path!