Statement from South Africa

for the

25th anniversary of the International Initiative for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Pollinators (IPI)

South Africa as a party to the Convention on Biological Diversity welcomes the ongoing activities and promotion of work that recognizes the contribution of farmers, indigenous and local communities to the conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity. As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the International Initiative for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Pollinators, South Africa reflects on its continuous recognition as one of the world's megadiverse countries. Through various assessments and reports, South Africa's rich diversity of pollinators – insects, birds, bats, lizards and rodents – has been shown to be integral to our ecosystems and pollination systems. These are further characterized by many specialized interactions between plants and their pollinators across our rich floral diversity. Of special mention are our bees, with over 1250 species documented. Although the economic contribution (over R10.3 billion South African Rands annually) made by the two subspecies of honeybee *Apis mellifera scutellata* and *A. m. capensis* remain the most extensively researched (sustaining agricultural food production (i.e., health and nutrition) and livelihoods (employment)), many other insect species remain important pollinators for crops.

Like many pollinators globally, South Africa's pollinators face numerous anthropogenic challenges that threaten their well-being and even existence, including pesticide use, habitat loss, altered fire regimes, impacts of climate change, pests and pathogens. Many of these threats are still not fully understood, and their impacts may currently be under-reported. It is, therefore, critical that assessments and research that contribute towards understanding various insect species' conservation status, trends and interactions are supported and implemented, together with efforts to raise awareness on the importance of maintaining the diversity of our pollinators for healthy plant-pollinator interactions, biodiversity and agricultural production systems.

Over the years, South Africa has made positive strides in creating the much-needed awareness on the importance of pollinators, working together with relevant industries and stakeholders – both in the environmental and agricultural sectors. Although more work is necessary in this regard, key initiatives and outputs have gained traction in the sector and some high-level examples can be accessed through platforms such as:

- https://www.sanbi.org/biodiversity/building-knowledge/applied-biodiversity-research/global-pollination-project-and-honeybee-forage-project-results/
- https://www.greentrust.org.za/2024/04/30/bees-an-essential-part-of-your-food-security/
- https://bee-effect.co.za/
- https://www.croplife.co.za/CropProtection/PollinatorSafety
- Melin, A., C. M. Beale, J. C. Manning, and J. F. Colville. 2024. Fine-scale bee species distribution models: Hotspots of richness and endemism in South Africa with species-area comparisons. Insect Conservation and Diversity 17: 474–487. doi:10.1111/icad.12715.
- Johnson, S.D., Geerts, S., Pauw, A. and van der Niet, T., 2025. Applications of pollination biology in studies of evolution, ecology and agriculture: Perspectives and trends from South Africa. South African Journal of Botany, 184, pp.88-99.

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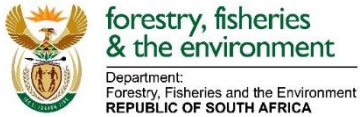
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