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Emeritus Professor Marc
Van Montagu
Chairman, Public Research
and Regulation Initiative (PRRI)
c.o. Delft University of Technology
Working Group Biotechnology and
Society Julianalaan 67 2628 BC Delft
The Netherlands

**Re: Your letter from 27 May 2013 regarding content on the EFSA website on
bee decline and GM plants**

Dear Professor Van Montagu,

Thank you for your letter dated 27 May 2013 in which you refer to the “Bee Health” page on EFSA’s website and related video. We value feedback of interested parties on EFSA’s communications as we continually strive to ensure that EFSA’s work, and the context in which we carry out that work, is clear and accurately reflected therein.

My colleagues and I have looked at your request for EFSA to amend the text and video on the “Bee Health” webpage that refers to GMOs. Please be assured that the points that you raise in your letter were carefully considered during the crafting of this web text and the development of the video, particularly in relation to ensuring that no undue significance or relevance was given to any of the factors we cite as possibly contributing to bee decline. Nevertheless, on reflection, we feel that this could be made even more explicit in the introductory section of the web text “Bees in decline” and have amended the text accordingly, adding reference to “possible” contributing factors. It now reads:

“No single cause of declining bee numbers has been identified. However, several possible contributing factors have been suggested, acting in combination or separately. These include the effects of intensive agriculture and pesticide use, starvation and poor bee nutrition, viruses, attacks by pathogens and invasive species – such as the Varroa mite (Varroa destructor), the Asian hornet (Vespa velutina), the small hive beetle Aethina tumida and the bee mite Tropilaelaps – genetically modified plants, and environmental changes (e.g. habitat fragmentation and loss).”

With regards to the other points you raise in your letter, we are satisfied that references to GMOs and bee health are consistent in style and level of detail with the references made to other scientific areas, again ensuring no undue relevance or significance is given to any single area.

Where additional information is provided on the work of EFSA's Pesticides Unit, this is because it relates to assessments that looked solely at the potential risk to bees (whereas in the area of GMOs the potential risk to bees is considered as part of a broader environmental risk assessment).

I would like to thank you again for your interest in EFSA's work and communications activities.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'A' followed by a horizontal line that extends to the right and then curves slightly upwards.

Anne Laure Gassin