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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Senator Melissa Hurtado, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

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**Bill No:** AB 1042

**Hearing Date:** 7/15/25

**Author:** Ransom

**Version:** 5/23/25

**Urgency:** No

**Fiscal:** Yes

**Consultant:** Reichel Everhart

**Subject:** The Cannella Environmental Farming Act of 1995: Managed Honeybee Health Program

### **SUMMARY:**

This bill authorizes the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to establish and oversee the Managed Honeybee Health Program. The bill authorizes CDFA, to the extent moneys are available, to provide incentives and grants to eligible recipients for health intervention projects that enhance the health and well-being of managed honeybees used in pollination services. The bill establishes the Managed Honeybee Health Special Fund Subaccount in which non-state, federal, and private funds may be collected and can be deposited.

### **BACKGROUND AND EXISTING LAW:**

Existing federal law:

- 1) U.S. Farm Services Agency: Established to serve all farmers, ranchers, and agricultural partners equitably through the delivery of effective, efficient agricultural programs for all Americans.<sup>1</sup>
- 2) Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish (ELAP): Offers financial aid to producers who suffer losses from specific adverse conditions not covered by other United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) disaster assistance programs. This includes losses due to disease, certain adverse weather events, and other qualifying conditions.<sup>2</sup>

Existing state law:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/resources/programs/emergency-assistance-livestock-honeybees-farm-raised-fish-elap>

- 1) Apiary Protection Program<sup>3</sup>: California mandates all beekeepers register their hives through the Apiary Protection Program, using the BeeWhere registration system and charges a scaling fee based on the number of hives registered.<sup>4</sup> Beekeepers use BeeWhere to register hives annually in their home county, notify other counties when they first move bees into those counties, and notify the County Agricultural Commissioner when they move bees to new locations within the county.<sup>5</sup>
- 2) Pollinator Habitat Program (PHP): The PHP prioritizes the planning and establishment of native habitats using locally appropriate native plant seed mixes where possible. Pollinators, such as bees, butterflies, and other species, play a critical role in the productivity of many agricultural crops and the health of natural ecosystems. However, pollinator populations are in decline due to various factors, including habitat destruction, pesticide use, disease, and climate change.<sup>6</sup>
- 3) Border Protection Stations (BPS): Honeybee shipments entering California are subject to two inspections: A cursory inspection at the border station and a more detailed inspection at the destination. These inspections are necessary because hitchhiking insect and weed pests.<sup>7</sup>

## **PROPOSED LAW:**

This bill:

- 1) States CDFA, in consultation with the Scientific Advisory Panel on Environmental Farming (Panel), may establish and oversee the Managed Honeybee Health Program to enhance the health and well-being of managed honeybees in California.
  - a. States the Panel may consult with commercial beekeepers, the State Veterinarian, farmers, county agricultural commissioners, professionals, scientists, and representatives of nongovernmental entities to advise the department on the program.
- 2) Establishes the following legislative declarations and intent:
  - a. Managed honeybees are essential to the health and productivity of California's agriculture and ecosystems.
  - b. California's agricultural sector, the largest in the United States, depends on pollination for the successful cultivation of over 90 crops, including almonds, berries, melons, and many fruits and vegetables, which annually contribute billions of dollars to the state's economy.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/plant/pollinators/ApiaryProtection.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://campb.ucdavis.edu/knowledge-base/legal>

<sup>5</sup> <https://beewhere.calagpermits.org/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oars/php/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/plant/pollinators/inspections.html>

- c. Managed honeybees also play a critical role in sustaining plant populations, supporting biodiversity, and maintaining healthy ecosystems.
  - d. Managed honeybee populations have experienced significant declines due to various factors, including habitat and forage loss, climate change, pests such as the Varroa mite, and diseases.
  - e. The loss of managed honeybees poses a serious threat to food security, biodiversity, and the resilience of ecosystems in California.
  - f. A decline in managed honeybee health negatively impacts California's economy by reducing crop yields, increasing the costs of pollination services, and diminishing the state's agricultural competitiveness.
  - g. Healthy managed honeybee populations are necessary for the preservation of ecosystems that provide natural water filtration, carbon storage, and soil stabilization, and contribute to California's environmental sustainability goals.
  - h. California has a longstanding tradition of leadership in environmental stewardship and sustainable agricultural practices. Promoting managed honeybee health aligns with California's goals to combat climate change, protect biodiversity, and advance sustainable agriculture. By prioritizing the health and management of managed honeybees, California can strengthen partnerships between agricultural producers, conservation groups, researchers, and policymakers.
  - i. It is the intent of the Legislature to prioritize the health of managed honeybees through collaborative efforts, incentives, research and education, and the adoption of practices that support the sustainability of California's agricultural ecosystems.
- 3) Defines the following:
- a. "Health intervention" to mean an intervention that improves the health status of managed honeybees, including, but not limited to, management practices and other disease preventives, or a therapeutic or nutritional intervention.
  - b. "Managed honeybees" to mean honeybees and colonies kept and managed by humans, primarily for purposes of pollination, honey production, and the production of other hive products such as beeswax, propolis, and royal jelly.
  - c. "Program" to mean the Managed Honeybee Health Program.
- 4) Allows, to the extent that moneys are available, CDFA to provide incentives and grants to eligible recipients for health intervention projects that enhance the health and well-being of managed honeybees used in pollination services.

- a. Eligible recipients may include, but are not limited to:
  - i. The project is located in and benefits a disadvantaged community identified pursuant to Section 39711 of the Health and Safety Code.
  - ii. The project applicant is a commercial beekeeper who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group, as defined in Section 512.
  - iii. The project demonstrates potential for replication in other parts of the state.
  - iv. The project provides environmental and agronomic co-benefits, such as reduced hive loss.
- 5) Allows CDFA to collect non-state, federal, and private funds for the purpose of the program to be deposited into the Managed Honeybee Health Special Fund Subaccount, to be created within the Climate Smart Agriculture Account in the Department of Food and Agriculture Fund.

**ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT:** According to the author:

“California is one of the nation’s top producers of crops like almonds, strawberries, and other fruits, all of which depend on pollinators to grow successfully. AB 1042 is a crucial bill that helps protect these pollinators, like honeybees, from environmental threats, pests, and other challenges that have already led to the loss of 1.1 million managed beehives. This bill creates a program to support beekeepers in safeguarding their colonies, which is vital for ensuring that California’s \$11 billion worth of crops continue to thrive with healthy honeybee populations.”

California Fresh Fruit Association, sponsor of the bill, along with other stakeholders write in a coalition letter:

“A thriving beekeeping industry is essential to sustaining California’s agricultural economy. However, recent reports of high bee mortality rates are deeply concerning. From June 2024 to February 2025, commercial beekeepers nationwide reported an average loss of 62% of their colonies, citing factors such as extreme weather, pests, diseases, pathogens, poor nutrition, ineffective pest management, and bee theft. Deadly diseases like American foulbrood and colony collapse disorder, combined with the invasive Varroa mite, pose significant threats to hive health. These losses not only have catastrophic financial impacts on beekeepers, who already operate on thin margins, but also disrupt the broader pollination network, affecting breeders, bee brokers, and

farmers. While the state has invested in pollinator-friendly initiatives, it has yet to directly support beekeepers and managed honeybee health. AB 1042 seeks to fill this gap by establishing the Managed Honeybee Health Program, which would provide grants and resources to commercial beekeepers and promote honeybee health. Additional funding could also be used for industry-guided research, technical assistance, and education.”

### **ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION:**

None received.

### **COMMENTS:**

Honeybees play a critical role in California’s agriculture. Compared to other bees like carpenter bees or bumble bees, honeybees are better pollinators because they build stronger colonies. The honeybee is responsible for pollinating some of the state’s most lucrative crops, including cherries, melons, and almonds. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife states over 1,200 types of crops require the help of pollinators, with pollinators contributing \$217 billion to the global economy. In California alone, pollinator-dependent crops are worth \$11.7 billion. Additionally, in 2024, California bees also produced 13.3 million pounds of honey – nearly 10 percent of the country’s supply – valued at \$32.8 million.<sup>8</sup>

Unfortunately, honeybees in California face many challenges including mites, pesticides, climate change, and hive theft. On June 4, 2025, the USDA Research Service released a report that “sheds light on the causes behind the catastrophic honeybee colony losses reported by commercial beekeepers earlier in the year.”<sup>9</sup>

The Varroa mite: The findings point to alarmingly high levels of viral infections as a result of the Varroa destructor mites with resistant genes to a common treatment. The study provided evidence of biological factors behind the wide-spread losses – that the mites collected from affected colonies tested positive for a genetic marker linked to resistance to Amitraz, the most commonly used miticide in commercial beekeeping. Looking for new tools and integrated pest management strategies is crucial to the future of honeybees in the state/country.

Climate change: In 2024, voters passed California Proposition 4, the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of

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<sup>8</sup> <https://calmatters.org/economy/2025/06/california-honey-bee-varroa-mites/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://adairvoice.com/stories/new-usda-research-links-early-2025-honey-bee-losses-to-high-viral-loads-and-mite-resistance,65029>

2024 (SB 867, Chapter 83, Statutes of 2024). Proposition 4 provided \$10 billion in general obligation bonds for water, wildfire prevention, and protection of communities and lands. These measures would support climate change mitigation efforts and promote healthy ecosystems which would benefit the honeybee population.

Hive theft: In 2024, hive thefts reached a record of about 3,600 hives stolen from orchards throughout the Central Valley. Hives are generally rented out with a rate anywhere from \$185 to \$225 per acre, with many growers using 2 hives per acre.<sup>10</sup> The California State Beekeeper Association has launched a prevention program aimed at investigating hive theft and offering tips on how to deter thieves such as using air tags and cameras.

One Health<sup>11</sup>: CDFA supports the One Health concept that recognizes human, animal, and environmental health are closely linked. This approach ensures collaboration between partners to acknowledge the interconnectivity between human health, animal health, and environmental health. It allows the department to take a cooperative approach to address issues such as zoonotic diseases, food insecurity, natural disasters, and changes in climate. This bill seems to adhere to CDFA's One Health approach.

Is there a link between honeybee health and human health? The health of honeybees, which pollinate about 1/3 of the fruits, vegetable, nuts, and seeds we consume has been linked to human health and food security in California. A decline in bee populations can lead to reduced crop yields, threatening food diversity, quality and availability which directly impacts human health and nutrition.

There is also a link between honeybees and environmental health: A 2024 article in *Environmental Science and Pollution Research* showed that bees collect airborne particulate matter on their bodies. These particles were analyzed using microscopy and X-ray and showed contamination sources that also correlate with human health risks.<sup>12</sup>

Ensuring beekeepers can access information is critical: In California, there are multiple organizations, programs, and legislative efforts in place to address various challenges related to bee health, beekeeping, and pollination. The Managed Honeybee Health Program would provide commercial beekeepers with a “one

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.fresnobee.com/news/local/article299801654.html>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.cdca.ca.gov/AHFSS/OneHealth.html>

<sup>12</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38615149/>

stop” coordinated approach to the protection of the health of honeybees by providing information on:

- 1) Incentives and grants for projects that enhance honeybee health
- 2) Technical assistance to help beekeepers implement best practices
- 3) Education and outreach to raise awareness about bee health.

### **RELATED LEGISLATION:**

SB 867 (Allen, Chapter 83, Statutes of 2024): Enacted the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024, creating Proposition 4, a \$10 billion bond to be placed before the state’s voters for approval. The proposition was placed on the November 5, 2024 ballot and received 5.79 million “yes” votes versus 4.16 million “no” votes.

AB 391 (Villapudua, 2022) *Placed on the Assembly Inactive File*: Would have allocated \$5 million to CDFA to increase the number of grants for technical assistance and research for enhancing pollinator habitat and forage.

AB 2421 (Mark Stone, Chapter 760, Statutes of 2018): Established the Wildlife Conservation Board Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Rescue Program.

### **PRIOR ACTIONS:**

Assembly Floor:	79 - 0
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	11 - 0
Assembly Agriculture Committee:	8 - 0

### **SUPPORT:**

California Fresh Fruit Association (Sponsor)  
A Voice for Choice Advocacy  
Agricultural Council of California  
Almond Alliance  
American Pistachio Growers  
California Chamber of Commerce  
California Citrus Mutual  
California Farm Bureau  
California State Beekeepers Association  
Croplife America  
Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment - RISE  
Western Growers Association

Western Tree Nut Association

**OPPOSITION:**

None received.

**-- END --**