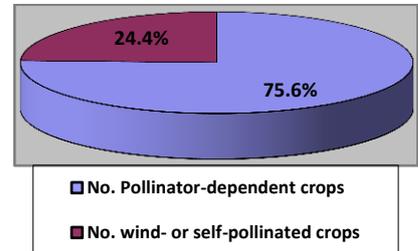


INFORMATION SHEET:

Key messages about pollinators in South Africa

Pollination is required for flowering plants to reproduce – and at the same time creates the fruits, vegetables and seeds that we eat.

The process of pollination typically requires a **pollinator**. Pollinators are usually insects, but sometimes birds, bats, or rodents. A study in 200 countries found that fruit, vegetable or seed production from **87 of the leading global food crops is dependent upon animal pollination**, while only 28 crops do not rely upon animal pollination (pollinate themselves or use wind pollination).



It is estimated that **agricultural production will need to increase by 60%** by the year 2050 due to growing human populations and an increase in consumption per capita. Studies show that increasing insect flower-visitor density can increase crop yield. In other words: the more insects you have, the better your crop yield.

In South Africa, about **50 crops need insect pollination**. Farmers need beekeepers to bring **honeybee hives** to their farms for the few weeks the crop is in flower to provide the high density of bees needed for good pollination. Honeybees are highly mobile and visit many different flowers of the same species over a fairly wide area as they feed. The **indigenous South African honeybees** are therefore vital to South Africa's food productivity and can be managed at the scale needed for our intensive large-scale crops.

Recent reports of **honeybee losses across the world** have encouraged public interest in honeybees and the resources they need for survival. While the South African honeybee subspecies are not officially classified as Threatened, they are experiencing threats, including: diminishing habitat and forage resources, pests like the *Varroa* mite, diseases like American Foulbrood, and inappropriate agro-chemical regimes that misuse pesticides or insecticides in the agricultural environment.

Key messages

- Managed honeybees are vitally important to food production in South Africa, but are under threat from decreasing forage resources, pests, diseases and pesticides.
- Bee-friendly policies and practices can help increase agricultural production / yield.
- Managed honeybees need a variety of habitat and forage resources all year round.
- As current habitat and forage resources are dwindling, we need to protect and maintain existing bee-friendly vegetation and plant more bee-friendly plants (as long as they are appropriate to the specific localities to prevent hybridisation or invasions).



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