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**Supporting a strong and prosperous honey bee industry in Manitoba**

Manitoba Crop Alliance (MCA) is providing $10,000 towards Manitoba Beekeepers’ Association (MBA) Knowledge Research Transfer Program (KRTP) for the fiscal year of April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023.

“Honey bees and sunflower production go hand in hand,” explains Ian Steppler, farmer and chairperson, MBA. “Sunflowers need pollination to increase seed set and bushel weight, and honey bees need sunflowers to bring in a honey crop and to sustain the development of their nests. Our two industries rely on each other, interact with each other, but historically haven't worked directly with each other.”

Implementation of the KRTP has built a direct line of communication between beekeepers and farmers in Manitoba, and with more partnerships, will continue to extend this communication. “To address production issues, we need to bring the issue down to the producer level and work with both beekeepers and farmers to help identify problems and find proactive solutions,” says Steppler. “We as producers need to ensure that our voice represents our needs and to do that, we need to work collaboratively with each other. Afterall, sustainable development is number one in all farmers minds.”

Communication between beekeepers and grain farmers is crucial to the sustainable development of beehives, as well as the sustainability of the cropping system as a whole. If farmers are aware of where the beehives are, they can contact the beekeepers to help identify any problems. Healthy honey bee hives pollinate sunflowers to bring in bigger and heavier yields, ultimately providing farmer members with a return on their investment.

“This partnership with MBA is a benefit not only for sunflowers, but for all of the crops we represent,” says Gregg Fotheringham, MCA director and sunflower committee delegate. “Like Ian previously mentioned, as grain producers we need to work collaboratively together to support beekeepers and their operations so we can move forward in the same direction.”

The KRTP has been developed to provide industry-led services that align with the MBA’s mission statement to: ‘Represent and promote the welfare of the entire Manitoba honey bee industry and the prosperity of its beekeepers’. The funding from MCA will go towards helping beekeepers address many of the major health issues within their hives.

Priority areas of the KRTP include:

* Communication: improve communication within Manitoba’s beekeeping community, grain farmers and the public
* Education: provide educational opportunities to help beekeepers become more profitable and sustainable
* Demonstrative Research: invest in demonstrative research to fill in information gaps that directly benefit beekeepers
* Monitoring: develop best management practises using beekeeper data (beekeeper managed hives)