“LIFE PollinAction” and “SPEAR® Bioinsecticide by Vestaron”

The European Bee Award honoured its Decennial and once again brought together several projects and initiatives working to protect pollinators and bees.

The European Bee Award was established in 2014 by the European Landowners’ Organization (ELO) and the European Agricultural Industry Association (CEMA) to acknowledge innovative, efficient, and scalable projects protecting bees and pollinators, underlining the importance of continuous innovation and research activities to safeguard their vital ecosystems.

Now on its tenth edition, the winners of the 2023 European Bee Award are:

- **Category ‘Land management practices’**: the winner is **LIFE PollinAction “Actions for boosting pollination in rural and urban areas”**. PollinAction is a LIFE project aimed at increasing landscape heterogeneity and connectivity through the creation of a Green Infrastructure (GI) in rural and urban landscapes, as a tool to mitigate the pollination crisis, increase pollinator provision and help develop multifunctional spaces. The project developed complementary activities targeting both habitat restoration/recreation and policy

implementation. Find more information here.

- **Category ‘Innovative and technological solutions’**: the winner is **SPEAR® Bioinsecticide** by **Vestaron**. SPEAR® is a novel peptide bioinsecticide, developed targeting a class of peptides that could kill insect and mite pests efficiently, but would be safe for humans, birds, fish, pollinators, and the environment. The company developed a proprietary platform for peptide optimization and for fermentation-based production, to yield a wide variety of peptide-based solutions for crop protection challenges. Find more information here and the story behind the product here.

For the first time this year there were two Special Mentions of the Jury assigned. The recognitions were granted to:

- **Vesp’Action** by **Polleniz**, an initiative to contribute to the biodiversity protection against the invasive species Vespa Velutina, with key citizen contributions through the flagging of possible nests. Find more information here.

- **TOXIBEES**, by Label BEE FRIENDLY, an online tool to quickly access information on the toxicity of any pesticide towards bees and pollinating insects. Find more information here.

During the ceremony, which also saw the presence of numerous previous winners, the host of the event **MEP Franc Bogovi?** said: “All the past participants and projects we have honored with the European Bee Award exemplify the spirit of innovation and dedication required to make a positive impact. The urgency of our cause cannot be overstated. Bees, butterflies, and other pollinators are the buzzing heroes of food supply, pollinating many different types of crops that make up the foundation of our diets. In the face of challenges faced by the population of pollinators today, it is our shared responsibilities to champion initiatives that not only recognize the importance of the creatures, but actively help them. Let us continue to work hard, for the bees are not only the keepers of our ecosystem, but also the barometers of our environmental integrity”.

Intervening to the event **Mr. Hans Stielstra**, Deputy Head of Unit of the Natural Capital and Ecosystem Health at European Commission’s DG ENVI intervened at the event commented: “The European Commission has, already with the European Green Deal, proposed many measures in support of pollinators, which are essential for ecology, economy and food production. More recently, we have introduced a New Deal for Pollinators, including a large number of actions. Some of them focus on research and innovation and it is therefore a pleasure to have some of those innovators here today”.

Thierry de l’Escaille, Executive President of ELO had positive words for the winners of the Land management practices category, remarking “This category recognizes practically oriented projects. The project rewarded this year is not just about theory, but the development of a practical and scalable model, which makes it especially interesting for land managers, as well as the

development of the idea of payment for ecosystem services which is at the forefront of our own conception of sensible European policy that would reward landowners in their sustainable practices".

Gilles Dryancour, Chairman of the CEMA Strategic Committee and member of the Bee Award Jury said: "From its conception in December 2013, the European Bee Award aimed at recognizing innovative projects that could contribute to a better protection of pollinators. This year's winner of the Innovative and Technological solutions category does just that. It harnesses the potential of what was created by nature, the peptides from spider venom, to create a biopesticide that is very effective, and safe, particularly for pollinators".

In 2023, the European Bee Award competition received 35 applications from 16 different European countries. This tenth edition's award ceremony gathered over 90 participants, including: beekeepers, policy makers, land managers, academia and representatives of the agri-food sector exchanged best practices, while getting inspired by new ideas on how to protect bees and enhance biodiversity in Europe.