

## **Citizen:**

Citizen 1:

When the bees started disappearing, I didn't think much of it. They were making such a big deal about it on the news, but I couldn't see why it was so bad. So what if there were a few less insects in the world? One less thing I had to worry about stinging me.

Nothing was really that different at first. The prices of produce started to creep steadily up, and the new coverage of "colony collapse disorder" was incessant. Other than that, the world pretty much continued on living life as it had before. But not for long. As bees began to drop dead at an alarmingly fast rate, the world began to change just as quickly. Prices for fresh fruits and vegetables skyrocketed as they became increasingly rare. Cucumbers, carrots, onions, tomatoes, blueberries, strawberries, watermelon, oranges, and a whole host of other foods began to disappear from my local grocery store.

People that could afford to would buy up as many fruits and vegetables as they could and sell them for ridiculous prices. I heard of one case where peaches were being bought for as much as three hundred dollars apiece. I personally love grapes, and the thought of never tasting them again brought me to spend sixty dollars on a pound of the increasingly rare fruit.

At first it was extremely difficult to get used to life without bees. I'd never realized how essential they were to the entire food chain. Humans aren't the only ones that depend on bees for food. Many animals suffered due to the sharp decrease in their food supplies, including livestock. Apparently animals like cows and chickens were fed with a feed created from almond hulls, and guess what used to pollinate almonds? With less almonds to feed livestock, milk, cheese, egg, and meat production suffered as well. For a while, our diets were diminished to mostly corn, rice, and wheat products. Hunger and malnutrition increased drastically. It was almost impossible to get the required vitamins and nutrients from diet alone, unless you were extremely wealthy and could afford the now astronomical prices of just about every type of food. Even corn, rice, and wheat rose in price, as there was initially not enough to satisfy people's demands. Eventually, food was rationed until a new system could be devised. The amount of food everyone received was controlled by the government to try and prevent starvation, and make sure there was adequate sustenance for everyone.

As chaotic as it got in the United States, other countries were much much worse off. Amongst the constant "no more bees" coverage were reports of new riots in other countries where food was not as equally allocated. Even though there were days when I was hungry, I knew that I was lucky to have any food at all, and grateful that my country hadn't erupted into a giant bloodbath.

It took some time, but the world began to adjust to life without bees. One of the biggest changes was the switch from large industrial farming to more local and personal gardens. Without the bees, the giant farms of the past could no longer be sustained. Governments provided incentives for individuals to have their own gardens that they cultivated using hand pollination. I currently have my own garden at home that provides me with a small amount of fresh produce. The hand pollination is tedious, but it's worth it for what it adds to my diet. Most of my friends and neighbors have their own gardens as well; they're small, but they provide our community with fresh fruits and vegetables. A lot of trading goes on in my neighborhood. If one family grows broccoli, and another family has cucumbers, they'll share so that they both have a broader selection. I've heard of other neighborhoods that have established community gardens, where work is distributed between households, and they share the fruits of their labor equally.

Dividing up the labor allows them to have greater variety, as well as making less work for everyone.

Shopping for food has become an entirely different experience as well. A lot of the big chain supermarkets closed down since there just wasn't enough food for them to sell. There are mostly local markets now that carry far less volume and variety. Imported produce is available for purchase, but they've become luxury goods that the average person can only purchase on occasion. The markets are used mostly to pick up rations and a few other items. Things like chocolate bars and potato chips still exist, but they're so expensive and uncommon that no one really eats them anymore. There just isn't enough food to create unnecessary items like that. The average American eats so much healthier than they used to. With processed food all but gone from shelves and the consumption of food regulated, obesity, heart disease, and diabetes have all decreased.

Ironically, destroying an entire part of nature and causing an almost entire collapse of the natural world has brought humans closer to nature. Never before had I grown my own food. I knew how my beloved grapes got to the grocery store, but I'd never experienced firsthand how they were cultivated. I now have a greater understanding of how fragile the natural world is as well. Luckily, humans are still able to survive after depleting just about all of our food sources, but we might not get that lucky next time. I think most people have realized that we need to take better care of the world, if only to watch out for ourselves and prevent another meltdown such as this one. Humans' relationships with nature have strengthened; the natural world has a much greater presence in the way people live their lives, and the decisions they make daily. I know I make more of a conscious effort to conserve water and reduce waste. We can only survive so many life changing disasters, and in order to ensure the future of humanity, we must first ensure the future of the world that we live in.

Citizen 2:

Like Katie, I have also adjusted to life without bees. At first, it was pretty scary to think of a decreased food supply. It seemed like some weird sort of dystopian movie, and in the beginning people were selfish and hoarded food. Soon, though, after government rations were implemented, we all began to adjust and figure out new, stable methods of food production. I didn't know too much about farming and food production before the Bee Collapse- I just went to the grocery store and bought whatever foods I felt like eating, and I did not have to think about how it was grown or where it came from. Now, I have had to change my eating habits to work around foods that are no longer available. I now have an extensive knowledge of which foods are not pollinated by bees (because they are the most widely available), and also which foods are locally grown near me and when different crops are in season. The USDA had huge educational ad campaigns with this information, and I think some people learned a bit from that, but I learned most of what I know from volunteering at a local farm.

With the food crisis, farms, especially local farms, grew in size and popularity, and needed more hands to help with the work. I wanted to feel like I was doing something to help, so I got to know local farmers and worked as much as I could to help grow the food. I have noticed that in times of crisis, lending a hand helps not only the farmers, but myself as well. Some people feel very anxious about food now, but I am confident knowing that I will have enough to eat and that I can grow my own food. There is enough food to go around, and by helping to produce it I am reminded of that. Like Katie, I also have my own garden in my backyard where I grow some

fruits and vegetables. I'm lucky that I live in a suburb and I'm able to do this; people who live in cities have to be much more creative with urban farming, or be completely dependent on others for produce. I think that overall this problem has made people in this country more cooperative and understanding. Everyone had to adapt and change their lifestyles, but they really rose to the challenge. Those who had enough shared with those who didn't, and people especially shared knowledge with each other. Now in my neighborhood most people have at least small gardens, and everyone understands the science behind the collapse of the bees.

Another huge impact, which I notice on a daily basis, is that people care more about the environment in general. In 2016, it seemed like only the fringe 'eco' people really thought that environmental damage was a huge issue. Some people recognized that climate change was an important problem, but they didn't think it was important enough to change their life in any way. When Colony Collapse Disorder first began, people didn't even know about it! And they certainly didn't do anything to help prevent it. This is partially the government's fault too- they did not do much to prevent it, but now they realize the problem too. For instance, we all rejoiced when certain pesticides like neonicotinoids were finally banned. It's too late for the bees now, but at least we know our leaders are making the right decisions for the environment. Regular people like me also make more environmentally friendly decisions. For one thing, people don't eat a lot of meat anymore. I was already a vegetarian, so I didn't have to make many changes, but I love that people finally realized how much more resources it takes to produce meat. It takes so much more food to raise animals, and with less food to go around, people realized they could just be eating those crops themselves. Even though the situation is now quite dire, with bees already gone, I am confident that we are now headed in a good direction, and climate change and environmental destruction won't get too much worse.