

Summary:

The year is 2030. Life now looks different than it did in 2016, because Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) has caused a near eradication of pollinator bees. Many factors, including climate change, pesticide use, mono cropping, disease, and parasites contributed to the collapse. Our society was not able to stop the decline before it was too late. Though honeybees did not officially become extinct, they are rare enough that they provide no significant crop pollination. Bees pollinate about a third of our food, so when the hives collapsed, so did our food system. The system of mass food production was based on industrialized bee pollination, where bees would pollinate huge amounts of one crop. Now that we cannot rely on bee pollination as an input to this system, food production is much more localized and small-scale. As a result of this, people are more involved with the production of their food, and more aware of food systems as a whole. In addition, people feel more connected to and protective of the natural environment.

The decline of the bee population really began with the advent of industrial farming. Other factors contributed to the so-called “Colony Collapse Disorder”; disease, mites, climate change, and habitat loss all played a part. But the establishment of the mono-cropping system, massive farms producing a single crop, disrupted the way of nature. Also, the use of harmful pesticides to increase yields harmed much more than intended, including bees. High yields were so important that farms in the U.S. continued to use these harmful pesticides long after concerns were raised about them. Bees were kept in colonies that were moved from crop to crop, instead of having their own natural colonies in the wild and pollinating at their own free will and discretion. Bees normally pollinate a high variety of plants, but in this system, they would pollinate only one crop at a time. By destroying bees’ habitat of many diverse plants, it became harder and harder for them to live in the wild. In creating a system that was so divergent from how Mother Nature intended, we doomed ourselves in the assumption that we could always bend nature to our needs. This system was not resilient; if one part disappeared, the whole system would collapse, and this is exactly what happened with CCD. The vulnerability and lack of diversity of this previously established system lent itself to an eventual collapse. Unfortunately it took this catastrophic collapse to enable any sort of rallied behavior to change the pre-existing conditions in which we operated in.

As the collapse disorder took a grip on our country, food prices skyrocketed and panic and hysteria swept the nation. The government was forced to address the issue at hand, as riots were breaking out, and people demanded change. Though they wanted change, it was not clear what change everyone was seeking. People did not want to resort to entirely processed foods (that can be made without bees). They wanted healthy food for their families that was harder and harder to come by. People were disconnected from the way their food was made; most people did not pay attention

to what was local or what was in season, and when the system crashed, this knowledge became necessary.

The federal government then did something unheard of, in the sense of bringing about social change through mandates and new laws, rather than trying to cover up the problem through temporary and artificial means. Through subsidies for small farmers, especially produce farmers (not animal products), increased food stamps, and a widespread ad campaign about food security and availability, the government helped the American people through this transition. This social change rendered industrial sized farming obsolete, as there was a heavy push for greater localized farming experiences. This social change incorporated a higher level of agricultural education as well, in attempts to establish a more intimate relationship between people and their food sources. From the elementary to the graduate level, there now is required agricultural education. There are also more incentives for young people to become farmers through more scholarships and diverse opportunities. Now that farming requires more knowledge and labor than it did before, it requires a larger percentage of the population. This is in no way a step backward; food production is a necessity for human existence, and new farmers are on the cutting edge of natural and sustainable farming. Before the collapse, most farmers were old, and young people were not as interested in entering the industry. Now, young people are excited about the prospect of working as farmers, as they can make a good living while providing crucial nutrition to their fellow Americans. Overall, people moved forward after this crisis by reassessing their relationship to nature in relation to food. This crisis has ultimately had positive influences on the American people by forcing them to acknowledge the environment and its needs in ways they never did before.