

## **INNOVATIONS IN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT WEBINAR:**

# **Responding to an S.O.S. from the Commercial Beekeeping Industry**

Marla Spivak, University of Minnesota

Tuesday April 22, 2014

12 pm (CT) / 1 pm (ET)

Given the chronic health problems facing honey bees and the increasing demand for pollination services from almond, blueberry, cranberry, apple, vine crops and many other growers, commercial beekeepers and breeders have requested assistance in maintaining healthy colonies. To this end, we began a novel "Bee Tech Transfer Team" program through the Bee Informed Partnership, a 5-year grant funded by USDA-NIFA. These teams consist of independent beekeepers that provide on-the-ground services to commercial beekeepers to assess and record colony health information; survey beekeepers about management; test for bee diseases and parasites; and assist in breeding bees that are more resistant to diseases and parasites. There is demand for this program nationwide and we are exploring ways to ensure that the Tech Team services are economically sustainable after the funding ends in 2016. As bees are directly or indirectly responsible for 35% of our diet through their pollination services, it is critical to increase effort to keep bees healthy and to provide hands-on assistance to the beleaguered beekeeping industry throughout the U.S.



Photo credit: Singeli Agnew

Marla Spivak is a MacArthur Fellow and McKnight Distinguished Professor in Entomology at the University of Minnesota. She has bred a line of honey bees, the Minnesota Hygienic line, to defend themselves against diseases and parasitic mites. Current studies include the benefits of propolis to honey bees, and the effects of agricultural landscapes and pesticides on honey bee and native bee health.

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446 W. Circle Drive, Room 66  
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