

**Affidavit of Edward R. Flanagan
of Wild Blueberry Grower Jasper Wyman & Son
in Support of
Funding Pollinator Health Research, Especially for CCD
Submitted June 26, 2008**



Affidavit of Edward R. Flanagan of Wild Blueberry Grower Jasper Wyman & Son in Support of Funding Pollinator Health Research, Especially for CCD, 6/26/2008

Chairman Cardoza, ranking member Neugebauer, and other members of the committee I want to thank you for recognizing the urgent, non-partisan, north to south and coast to coast problem that faces this nation's food supply if we don't solve the mystery that is endangering our pollinating bees.

My name is Ed Flanagan. I am here today as the President & CEO of Jasper Wyman & Son, the largest U.S. owned blueberry grower. We grow wild (or lowbush) blueberries in eastern Maine and we also have operations in Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick in the Canadian Maritimes. In Maine, combining what we grow on our land and what we buy from other growers, we process and market between 35-40% of the U.S. wild blueberry crop. But besides Wyman's I am here to express the concern of all wild blueberry and cultivated blueberry growers who according to the USDA had farm gate value in 2007 of nearly \$600 million.

In our business it is simple.....No bees, No blueberries!

You may not know that there are three fruits that are native to North America – concord grapes, cranberries and wild blueberries. Early native Americans used wild blueberries for food, coloring and for medicinal remedies. What they knew then the American consumer has come to know in the last several years thanks to well grounded research from some of our best universities and laboratories and that is that blueberries are one of the healthiest foods you can add to your diet. Wild blueberries can't be planted. Not here, not in Chile, not in China. It is a root system that is indigenous to Maine and the Maritimes and more like a mineral resource than a crop in that way. Thus it has always had strong, enduring export market demand. It is a small but important crop for America and it is very important to the economy of eastern Maine.

That health news has led to some good years. In agriculture it seems that supply and demand are almost never in balance. In the case of blueberries in recent years demand has been ahead of supply. Farm gate earnings have been healthy and we have been able to absorb pollination costs that have more than doubled in the last three years. We know that supply will catch up with demand, prices will go down and we will need sharp control of our costs. Agriculture is one tough and honest way to make a living and we face our challenges head on but we are very scared at the prospect of no pollinating bees for our fields. There is no alternative.

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Wild blueberry fields, called barrens, are usually bordered by forest land and we have learned to live with nature and its perils and marvel at its complex interactions. For example if we don't string electrified wire around the hives in the fields the bears have a feast at our expense.

What scares us about Colony Collapse Disorder is what the beekeepers have observed – healthy bees refusing to go into the sick hives to rob the honey, the normal predators (hive beetles and moths) keeping their distance from an impacted hive, the practice of putting a healthy hive near a diseased one to repopulate the weak one but instead killing the healthy one. Something is very, very wrong.

A good wild blueberry crop needs three basic things to happen. A snow cover over the low growing plants in the winter to protect the buds from cold temperatures, good pollination in May and then from June to August a good mix of sun and rain.

The wild blueberry crop blooms in May and it takes two-three weeks to get good pollination. The bees won't work if it is cold or windy which it can be in Maine then and we accept that neither the beekeepers nor Congress can do anything about that. We don't ask for your help often because there really isn't much you can do but we need it here.



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If you have my testimony in front of you you can see what a good blueberry crop in August looks like. Every one of those berries owes its existence to the crazy, neurotic dancing of a honey bee from flower to flower. If there were no beekeeping industry to come to Maine the amount of fruit pollinated by natural pollinators would not amount to enough to keep farming the land. We would either be out of this business altogether or charging a price five fold or ten fold what it is now just to go out and get what was there.

Members of the committee, I don't know who or why anyone would oppose budgeting research funds for this critical problem. I urge you not to use Washington inertia as an excuse. I firmly believe that if it was the pesticide family of neonicotinoids it may have been an unintended consequence of the chemical industry trying to replace directly toxic organophosphates with a more benign alternative. We need to put the blame game aside and get to the end point which is knowledge.

I have never seen a problem in agriculture get more press coverage and more consumer awareness in a short time than this. There is need...there is momentum... and what we need now is political will. I hope you are the right people for that.

Thank you.

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About Jasper Wyman & Son: Wyman's was founded in 1874 in Milbridge ME and is still privately owned by the Wyman family. Wyman's is the largest U.S. owned blueberry grower in the United States with farm and processing operations in Washington County Maine. The company also has a wholly owned subsidiary in Prince Edward Island, Canada with farm and factory assets on PEI and in New Brunswick.

Wyman's grows wild (or lowbush) blueberries as well as cranberries and is a significant importer of other berry fruits, principally from Chile.

Wyman's markets frozen fruits as well as canned and juice products to the ingredient, foodservice and retail markets in the U.S, Canada, Japan and the EU.



About Ed Flanagan: Ed Flanagan joined Wyman's in 1993 and has been President & CEO since 1995. Prior to that he worked for 12 years for H.P. Hood, Boston in dairy and citrus marketing, sales and general management responsibilities. He also worked in various sales and marketing roles for Ocean Spray Cranberries and for Waddington's U.S.

Mr. Flanagan presently serves on the Board of Directors of the American Frozen Food Institute (AFFI) and will become Chairman in 2010. He also is a member of the Sustainable Food Laboratory, an international effort to improve food system sustainability. In the past he has served as President of the Wild Blueberry Association of North America (WBANA) and as a member of the Florida Department of Citrus Foodservice Advisory Board. He holds a BA degree from St Michael's College, Colchester VT and an MBA from New York University. He lives in Boxford Ma and is married with three sons.



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