

The Co-Operative To Create An Army Of Urban Beekeepers

The **co-operative**

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An army of new urban beekeepers supported by [The Co-operative](#) could help to reverse the worrying decline in the British honeybee population.



As part of its on-going Plan Bee campaign, The Co-operative has today (1 March) announced a further £225,000 to fund bee research, as well as a step up in its support of the establishment of hives in city gardens and allotments across the UK.

More and more city dwellers are taking up beekeeping since the plight of the British honeybee population, which experts believe halved in England between 1985 and 2005, was publicised. Last year, The Co-operative piloted an urban apiary and beekeeping courses in Manchester parkland using a revolutionary lightweight plastic beehive. Now it is planning to roll out the idea to other inner city areas in London, Manchester and Inverness.

In addition to the new hives this will lead to, The Co-operative Farms also has 600 hives on its farmland.

Launched in January 2009, the £475,000 Plan Bee campaign aims to raise awareness of honeybee decline, fund research, and encourage people to help [save the bees](#) and plant bee-friendly wildflowers.

To date the research programme has sponsored investigations into the mapping of native British black honeybees and the impact of neonicotinoid pesticides in the UK. The initial findings of which are expected in the summer of 2010.

Paul Monaghan, Head of Social Goals at The Co-operative, said: "Nature's number one pollinating machine appears to be breaking down and no one knows for sure why. Urban beekeeping is becoming increasingly popular and could be a vital tool in the reverse of honeybee decline in the UK.

"Through our urban beekeeper projects we want to show people that you don't have to have acres of land to take up beekeeping."

As well as the Plan Bee campaign to save the bees the Co-operative Group is involved in a number of important causes that are well worthy of recognition such as Marine reserves and the opposition to extracting oil from unconventional sources such as [tar sands](#).

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