

## 2014: where do we stand?

*Tjeerd Blacquière*

Last year was special for beekeepers in the Netherlands: though spring arrived late we experienced a good wintering success, then had a cold spring but happily a rather nice mid- and late summer, and so far a very mild winter.

Also *around* beekeeping the year was special. There was a lot of dispute about the causes of bee mortalities (not restricted to honeybees), and a broad discussion about what to do to make our bees stronger and healthier. This discussion was strongly enforced by the Dutch under minister for Economic Affairs (including Agriculture) Sharon Dijksma, who tried by elaborate discussions with all stakeholders including concerned citizens to reach consensus and commitment for an 'Action plan for Bee Health'.

For bees@wur of Plant Research International 2013 was the final year of the three years research program on 'Sustainable control of *Varroa destructor*', the Dutch part of the European 'honey program'. Our reporting was sent to the ministry in September, and put through to Brussels in November 2013.

The research carried out built on earlier research we did, and not everything had been finished then, let alone been published. Therefore it is worthwhile to step aside a while and reflect: what has been reached, and where do we stand now? In the reporting I asked this question per subject, and below I will report on our findings in a few short articles.

In the American movie 'Mulholland Drive' the observer experiences some kind of déjà vu after seeing again the sign 'Mulholland drive' appearing in the gleam of the car headlights: here we had been before, weren't we? How did we return to the place? Did we not make any progress since? A similar undefined and alienating feeling imposed on me while reading the paper of [Berry et al., 2013](#) (Plos One), in which they tested the effect of a pair of acaricides for varroa control on bees. The bees were hampered by the chemicals, but not so for the mites.

Have we returned to square one? Or do we still progress?