
Nominated for the Public Eye Global Award 2008 by: Coalition Against BAYER-Dangers, and the Pesticide Action Network:

Bayer CropScience

Headquarters:	Monheim, Germany
Sector:	Agrochemicals
Turnover / Profit:	€ 5.7 billion / € 584 million (2006)
CEO:	Friedrich Berschauer
Owned by:	Subgroup of the publicly-traded Bayer AG
Employees:	17,900 (2006)

In Brief

*Bayer CropScience is the world's largest producer of pesticides. Although its products harm biodiversity and the environment, Bayer is keen on presenting a sustainable image. Its most recent attempt is with the *Jatropha* plant, used for fuel. *Jatropha* is publicized as a wonder plant by the auto industry and agrochemical firms, but environmental organizations in Southern countries warn against its widespread cultivation. Bayer CropScience joined the *Jatropha* hype this year, and is now intensively developing seeds and crop protection products. The corporation is also working together with Daimler (formerly DaimlerChrysler), which has already had *Jatropha* planted in India. Bayer CropScience is backing up its investment in *Jatropha* with intensive and promising lobbying at the United Nations.*

A corporation behaves badly

Eighty-three percent of Bayer CropScience sales are generated by chemical crop protection products, which makes Bayer a key player in industrial agriculture. Currently, the corporation is attempting to capture a leading position in the growing market of agrofuels. Bayer can smell profit potential, both for seeds and for the corresponding crop protection products, and it is carrying out research on plants that are not yet well known. One of these plants is *Jatropha curcas*, a bush whose seeds are poisonous but which contain up to 40 percent oil content. Oil with an octane rating of 60 can be produced from the seeds of this extremely hardy plant, and it is therefore one of the most effective vegetable oils in the world and can be used relatively easily in diesel autos. *Jatropha* can be planted in marginal soil in subtropical and tropical regions, as well as in degraded soils where intensive food production is not possible. *Jatropha* lobbyists – among them close partners Bayer CropScience and Daimler – are taking advantage of this fact. A prominent example is in India, where the government makes so-called “wastelands” available for the planting of *Jatropha*, and where Daimler has had *Jatropha* planted. But even though the name suggests otherwise, these “wastelands” are far from useless; the poorest segments of the population collect nuts, fruits and medicinal plants there and use it as pasture land.

Bayer CropScience is now intensively researching to increase the efficiency of Jatropha. The German agrochemical corporation plans to market genetically-modified and herbicide-resistant seeds and the corresponding crop protection products. These products are geared to increase the dependency of farmers on the agrochemical industry. To achieve this goal, Bayer CropScience is aggressively promoting itself in the control centers of world politics. Since 2002 the firm has had a contract with the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), which allows it to present promotional displays at negotiation meetings, and which gives Bayer direct access to government representatives. Bayer is also well-connected with the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP): It supports the UNEP's youth programs with one million euros annually.

Consequences

Agrochemical corporations like Bayer CropScience claim that their products protect biological diversity and fight desertification. In reality, Bayer CropScience, as the world's largest producer of pesticides, contributes to soil erosion and the loss of biological diversity. While the seeds and crop protection products for Jatropha are likely to generate profits for the chemical concern and the automobile industry, the losers are once again the farmers in Southern countries. They lose precious land that is a source of food, and they bear the environmental burden through intensive cultivation for agrofuels. In addition, small farmers engaged in contract farming will become dependent upon the expensive agrochemical products.

Current Status and Demands

Together with Daimler, Bayer CropScience collected signatures from government representatives at the UNCCD conference in September 2007 for the cultivation of Jatropha. The well-known Indian activist Vandana Shiva published a study on the impacts of Jatropha cultivation in India at the end of November, and started a large-scale opposition campaign. The nominating NGOs call on Bayer CropScience to halt its efforts to bring agrofuels to market. Furthermore, Bayer should revise its claim that Jatropha is only being planted on useless land. Jatropha must not be patented, and further research in genetic modification must be stopped. In order to prevent greenwashing, the NGOs call on the United Nations to establish criteria defining with whom they cooperate, and under what conditions.

Further Information:

- www.presse.bayer.de/baynews/baynews.nsf/id/6B696ADCCCB206D0C125734E002127CE?open&ccm=000
- www.empa.ch/plugin/template/empa/3/60112/---/l=2/changeLang=true/lartid=60112