

## Monsanto Company

Headquarters: Saint Louis (Missouri/USA)  
Turnover /Net profit: Fiscal year 2004: US\$ 5,5 billion/ US\$267 million  
Branch of trade: agricultural products (notably seeds und herbicides)  
Owned by: In 2000, Monsanto and Pharmacia & Upjohn merge to form Pharmacia Corporation; in 2002 Monsanto becomes a separate entity again.  
No. of employees: 2003: 13,200 worldwide  
CEO: Hugh Grant  
Member to the WEF: YES (in January 2004)

### **Outline**

*Monsanto is the world leader in developing and commercialising genetically modified seeds. These seeds may cause environmental damage and have negative socio-economic consequences, as experiences in Argentina, India, the Philippines or Canada have shown. The Berne Declaration urges Monsanto to stop the release of genetically modified organisms (GMO) and to refrain from seeking patents on living organisms.*

### **General Information on the Case**

Monsanto is the driving force behind the development and commercialisation of genetically modified seeds. In 2002, Monsanto supplied the seeds for almost 90 percent of the area planted with GMO-crops. Sales of GMOs in Europe and other states that limit imports or require product declarations are still minimal. Monsanto also pursues aggressive marketing policies in the countries of the global south.

The risks of GMO cultivation have become evident in Argentina, for instance. In 1996, Argentina became one of the first countries to approve Monsanto's so-called RR-soybeans (RR stands for „Roundup Ready“) for commercial growing. RR-soybeans are genetically modified to make them resistant to the herbicide Glyphosat (sold under the trademark „Roundup“). „Roundup“ is also a Monsanto product. In 2001, Argentina experienced the first negative effects of this cultivation (increase in resistant weeds, high herbicide use, augmentation of large-scale monocultures). Greenpeace is calling for a ban on RR-soybeans because of serious concerns about their environmental impact.

It is also becoming clear that genetically modified seeds are no guarantee for better harvests. In November 2004, farmers in the village of Phanidam in India released nine hostages after the Monsanto district manager promised to pay compensation for harvest losses caused by genetically modified Bt-cotton. In 2004, about one thousand farmers protested against Monsanto on Mindanao

Island in the Philippines. They complained about health problems and harvest losses caused by Bt-cotton. They also claimed that Monsanto was squeezing them financially with high seed prices.

Another unsolved problem is the contamination of fields without GMO crops. In 2002, Canadian farmers in Saskatchewan took Monsanto and Aventis to court over the contamination of their GMO-free crops with genetically modified rapeseed. They claim the contamination is so strong that most farmers have stopped growing rapeseed. Now Monsanto is lobbying governments around the world for a rule that would permit the contamination of a small percentage of GMO-free products.

### **Characteristics of irresponsible corporate behavior**

- Marketing GMOs without a thorough technology impact assessment
- Market control: through patents on seeds Monsanto is making farmers dependent on its products and gains control over agriculture. Patents lead to an unconscionable concentration of power in the seed business. A 1999 antitrust-suit filed in a US-court by NGOs and farmers against various biotech corporations such as Monsanto is still pending.
- Biopiracy: In October 2004, the European Patent Office canceled a Monsanto patent on Indian wheat after a complaint by Greenpeace. The corporation had tried to claim ownership of valuable genetic resources developed by Indian farmers through natural methods.

### **Consequences**

GMOs are the result of an immature technology. They benefit mostly the corporations that produce them, while the public ends up paying the cost of the negative effects on human health and the environment. Once released, GMOs cannot be recalled like other faulty products because they are living organisms that reproduce independently. A scenario in which a few corporations control the world's seed supply threatens biodiversity in agriculture and the free access to seeds and thus puts world food security at risk.

### **Current Status and Demands**

The Berne Declaration urges Monsanto to stop the release of GMOs as long as their negative effects are not effectively eliminated. EvB also demands a ban on patents for living organisms.

### **Link to the details of the nomination: [www.evb.ch/nominations.htm](http://www.evb.ch/nominations.htm)**

- [www.greenpeace.ch](http://www.greenpeace.ch)
- Isabelle Delforge: „Nourrir le monde ou l'agrobusiness“, enquête sur Monsanto, Mai 2000