

# Fact Sheet

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## Monsanto's Donation

- Monsanto is donating "\$4 million worth of conventional hybrid corn and vegetable seeds to be made over the next 12 months..." Donations will include 60 tons of hybrid corn and vegetable seeds, a second shipment of 70 tons and possibly another 345 tons over the next 12 months.
- The hybrid seeds create the need for water and fungicides that cost more than locals can afford. The price of the seeds as well as shipping will also ultimately likely cost more than Haitian farmers can afford.
- According to the Monsanto blog, the seeds are treated with fungicides to prevent fungal diseases. The New Jersey government issued a cautionary statement on commonly used fungicides such as Thiram, which is used as a fungicide and seed disinfectant, and can have negative impacts when you breathe it in. According to the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services *Hazardous Substance Fact Sheet*, it can also cause skin allergies, rashes and breathing problems and "repeated exposure can affect the kidneys, liver and thyroid gland. High or repeated exposure may damage the nerves." The document also dubbed Thiram a *mutagen* and recommended wearing protective work clothing while exposed to Thiram and using local exhaust ventilation or respirators.
- Monsanto's May 20, 2010 blog post claims the seeds are hybrid and not GMO. The donation of the seeds have long-term consequences because they create a dependency on Monsanto seeds, which are expensive and corrosive to the land. They also said: "There are no contractual obligations between Haitian farmers and Monsanto since this is a donation. In fact, there are no business transactions at all between Monsanto and Haitian farmers in regards to these seeds. Monsanto is earning no revenue from this donation."

## Agricultural & Health Facts

- The act of using these seeds contaminates the land and eliminates the ability of these Haitian farmers to grow and export organic agriculture in the near future. According to the California Organic Foods Act of 1979, foods described as organic or naturally grown must be produced: without the use of

synthetically compounded fertilizers, pesticides or growth regulators. In the case of annual and two-year crops, no synthetically compounded fertilizers, pesticides or growth regulators may be applied to the area for 12 months before.

- Some seeds from Monsanto are described in the media as *terminator seeds*. According to the 2009 post on the Monsanto website, "Sterile seed technology is a type of Gene Use Restriction Technology (GURT) in which seed produced by a crop will not grow." The company says it sees positive and negative aspects of GURT but claims it "has never developed or commercialized a sterile seed product... If Monsanto should decide to move forward in the area of GURTs, we would do so in consultation with experts and stakeholders, including NGOs."
- The use of seeds also impacts the land in neighboring Dominican Republic.
- Monsanto has a history of making harmful chemicals. According to the Dow Chemical website, "Companies supplying Agent Orange to the government included The Dow Chemical Company, Monsanto Company, Hercules Inc., Diamond Shamrock Chemicals Company, Uniroyal Inc., Thompson Chemical and T-H Agriculture and Nutrition Company." While Dow says "scientific consensus is that when the collective human evidence is reviewed, it doesn't show that Agent Orange caused veteran's illnesses," the U.S. government thinks otherwise. On March 25, 2010, the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) said this is a press release: "Well over 100,000 Veterans exposed to herbicides while serving in Vietnam and other areas will have an easier path to qualify for disability pay under a proposed regulation published by the VA that adds three new illnesses to the list of health problems found to be related to Agent Orange and other herbicide exposures." Based on data from an independent study by the **Institute of Medicine**, these three illnesses are: B cell leukemias, such as hairy cell leukemia; Parkinson's disease; and ischemic heart disease.

## Legal Implications & The Agricultural Monopoly

- In a post on the Monsanto website, the company explains why it "sues farmers.

According to the Monsanto website, “When farmers purchase a patented seed variety, they sign an agreement that they will not save and replant seeds produced from the seed they buy from us... A very small percentage of farmers do not honor this agreement. Monsanto does become aware, *through our own actions or through third-parties*, of individuals who are suspected of violating our patents and agreements. Where we do find violations, we are able to settle most of these cases without ever going to trial.”

- On March 12, 2010, the U.S. Department of Justice revealed that together with the Department of Agriculture, it would hold a joint public workshop on competition and regulatory issues in the agriculture industry. According to a March 12, 2010 New York Times article, AG **Eric Holder Jr** traveled to the Midwest to express concern over “anticompetitive practices in agriculture.”
- Monsanto is in the midst of an ongoing legal battle with Geertson Seed Farms over Roundup Ready alfalfa. Soon to be heard by the Supreme Court, according to an April 27, 2010 Monsanto announcement, planting of the crop was banned by the lower court in May 2007. Alfalfa is the fourth largest crop grown in the U.S., according to Monsanto, which also said the Roundup Ready alfalfa completed an FDA food safety review and that the EPA deemed it safe to use Roundup on the crop. However, Roundup has detrimental impacts on the soil and people.
- According to a May 3, 2010, New York Times article, Roundup Ready crops makeup roughly 90% of the soybeans and 70% of corn and cotton grown in the U.S. The article also noted that while Roundup was once a miracle chemical for farmers, long-term use has led to the development of *superweeds* that are resistant and force farmers to use more expensive techniques they’d earlier abandoned. The article also noted that the product created minimum till farming. “By combining Roundup and Roundup Ready crops, farmers did not have to plow under the weeds to control them.” That reduced erosion, the runoff of chemicals into waterways and the use of fuel for tractors.” But, the need for frequent plowing will have a negative impact on the environment, forcing farmers to use another product to kill resistant weeds, including the use of herbicides and pesticides.
- From 1985 to 2000, Monsanto made aspartame, a legal artificial sweetener found in Equal and Nutrasweet. In 1985, it purchased **G.D. Searle & Co.** and created the **NutraSweet Company**, which made NutraSweet and Equal. It sold NutraSweet Co. to **J.W. Childs** and Equal to **Merisant**, in

2000. A study in Bologna, Italy, resulted in the European Ramazzini Foundation deeming aspartame a carcinogen. The FDA had a difference in opinion and still believes aspartame is safe.

### **Monsanto in the Developing World**

- The use of Monsanto cotton seeds in some developing nations has resulted in adverse effects. According to the Monsanto website, “During field monitoring of the 2009 cotton crop in the state of Gujarat in western India, Monsanto and Mahyco scientists detected unusual survival of pink bollworm to first-generation single-protein Bollgard I (event MON531) cotton.” The use of three white maize hybrids in South Africa resulted in lower yields, the opposite of the intent of GMO products. “Three hybrids contain either Roundup Ready or the stack of Roundup Ready and YieldGard. In some cases, the variable pollination causes a reduction in the number of kernels... While there is variation in pollen production, the average pollination in the fields is about 90%. That means, on average, the yield reduction is about 10%.”
- In 2005, Monsanto agreed to pay a fine or civil penalty of \$500,000 as part of a settlement with the US regulator Securities and Exchange Commission after the Department of Justice charged Monsanto with violating the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act by bribing an Indonesian official to get licenses to sell its seeds. The company paid a separate \$1 million penalty for bribery and false books when it bribed a senior environment official in Indonesia to get the government to repeal the requirement that an environmental impact study be conducted before the government allows the use of GMO seeds.
- According to a February 12, 2010 Bloomberg article, Monsanto plans to lobby the Brazilian government for higher taxes on an herbicide coming from China, which has produced many lower cost herbicides that are competition to Monsanto’s main products. In June 2003, Brazilian farmers protested Monsanto many times for its development and distribution of GMO crops, BBC reports.