

# Merger from Hell

## Six reasons why a Bayer-Monsanto merger threatens people and the planet

### A food system under corporate control

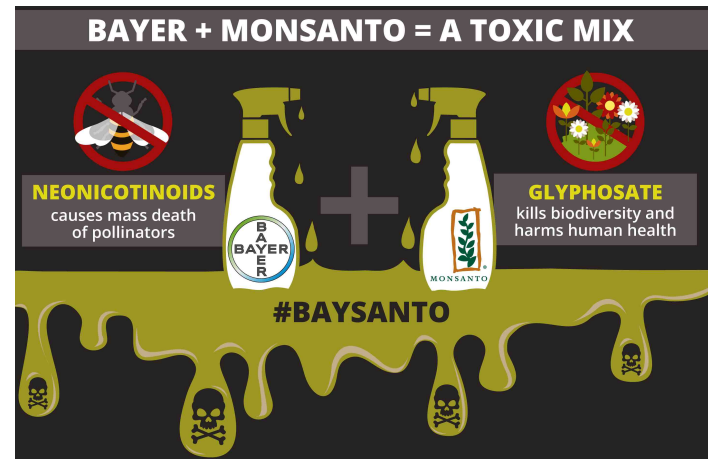
Our food system is broken: Europe's current model of farming and food consumption is destroying people and the planet.

Agribusiness corporations like Bayer and Monsanto continue to promote an industrial model of agriculture that is destroying soils, water supplies, rural communities and biodiversity, and is slowly turning the Earth into a desert. Monsanto and Bayer are two of the most influential companies in this industry and the consequences of their toxic activities are felt throughout the globe.

A merger between these two agribusiness giants would be catastrophic for people and the planet. It would put more pesticides in our food and water; increase the amount of genetically-modified produce on our plates, and endanger public health. It would increase the already massive corporate control over our food and farming systems and crush small-scale and independent farmers. It is them, not big multinational actors like Bayer and Monsanto, who are feeding the majority of people worldwide and are therefore the front-line defenders of global food security.

For years we have been fighting for a food system free from corporate control that provides pesticide-free food; guarantees a decent living for small-scale farmers, and ensures food sovereignty for all. The planned merger goes against all of those principles.

It is not safe to leave so much power in the hands of so few, especially when it affects something as vital as the food we eat. If we are to have any chance of reversing the harmful effects of industrial agriculture, this merger must not be approved.

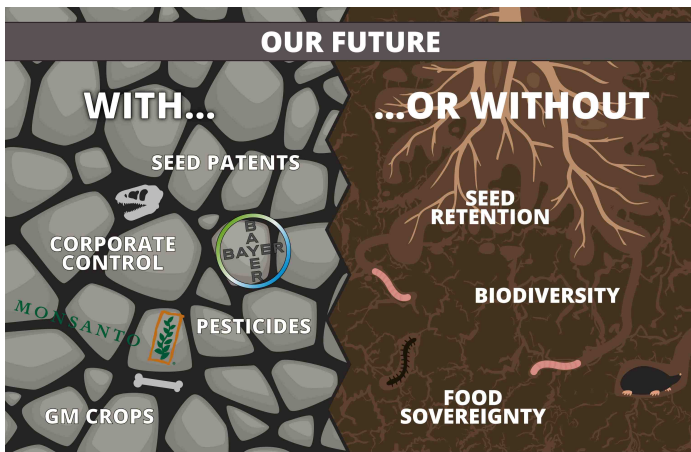


### A toxic mix

Although widely used across the world, many Bayer and Monsanto products are highly toxic for people and planet.

One kind of problematic Bayer insecticides are the so-called 'neonicotinoids', whose active ingredients are a main driver of the large-scale death of bees and other pollinators. Although this has terrible consequences for ecosystems and food production, Bayer has started a lobby war to overturn a partial ban on neonicotinoids in the EU.

By the advice of the EU's food safety agency EFSA, the partial ban was issued for three neonicotinoids in 2013. This led Bayer to hire 'product defense company' Exponent to attack the scientific evidence underlying the ban. Bayer is currently suing the European Commission to see this partial ban overturned. But its war on science looks set to be in vain: the EU is expected to announce a complete ban on neonics this year. In an attempt to at least limit reputational damage, the company is running 'Bayer Bee Care Centers' - an obvious greenwashing initiative.



For Monsanto, its biggest worry is also its biggest cash cow: **glyphosate**. The active ingredient in its flagship weedkiller RoundUp was found to “probably cause cancer in humans” by the World Health Organisation. Yet its widespread use means glyphosate residue can now be found in human urine and breastmilk.

This year the EU has to decide whether to grant another 10-year market authorisation for glyphosate-based weed killers. Given the WHO findings, an EU ban of the substance should be beyond debate. But Monsanto has been trying to rubbish the scientific evidence against its product. It insisted the WHO study on glyphosate was “junk science”, and has been running the industry lobby group ‘Glyphosate Task Force’.

Although the EU agencies for food safety and chemicals already concede that glyphosate can seriously damage sight and has long-lasting toxic effects on aquatic life, they reject its likely carcinogenic characteristic in humans. Tellingly, these EU risk assessments are based on Monsanto-owned studies that are not fully available for independent scrutiny and were not compiled by independent scientists.

Almost 1,5 million people signed a petition to ban glyphosate, and this year a European Citizens’ Initiative was launched.

### Take action

Sign the European Citizens' Initiative:  
[www.corporateeurope.org/stopglyphosate](http://www.corporateeurope.org/stopglyphosate)  
 and follow #StopGlyphosate on Twitter.

## Lobby spending

Bayer and Monsanto have to declare their lobby spending in the EU and the US in transparency registers. But these figures only cover direct lobbying in the capitals. Many other costs lurk beneath the surface.

The US has a legally-binding register with a quarterly reporting requirement. However the EU transparency register is voluntary and there are no sanctions for misleading declarations. This makes the data unreliable and often unrealistic. There are few resources for verifying declarations, which makes it virtually impossible to trust the reported data.

Given the restraints of the EU register, the figures for Bayer and Monsanto's EU lobby spending represent the tip of the iceberg. According to Open Secrets, Monsanto’s lobbying in the US in 2015 amounted to an estimated \$4,330,000, but the company only declared lobby spending of between €300,000 and €399,999 in the EU's register. It looks similar for Bayer: While the company declared \$7,730,000 lobby spending for 2015 to the US authorities, Bayer only declared €1,989,000 to the EU authorities.



The very different declarations make it hard to believe that these figures are accurate, especially considering that the EU market in trade terms is bigger than the US market. Bayer and Monsanto's declared lobby spending for 2015 alone amounts to at least €13,521,187 when combined. But the real amount is likely to be much higher.

In addition to their in-house lobbyists who attempt to influence legislation on their behalf, Bayer and Monsanto also use other lobby strategies to make their voice heard.

Public relations companies, trade associations, think tanks, law firms, product defence companies and lobby consultancies are among the actors employed by Bayer and Monsanto to echo their positions, produce and push studies in their favour and provide PR strategies, for example. These companies get paid generous fees by Bayer and Monsanto, for example, to set up industry-orchestrated groups like the 'Glyphosate Task Force', which is run by Hume Brophy for Monsanto.

There is no way of knowing exactly how much Bayer and Monsanto spend on these for-hire lobby actors every year – presumably a large sum – which might far exceed their spending on in-house lobbyists.

## Tangled in the lobby web

**Monsanto and Bayer have built a vast network of influencers to bend EU laws and safety standards in their favour. Lobby activities on their behalf are coordinated by lobby associations organised at global, regional and national level.**

In Brussels, Monsanto and Bayer are represented by the seed lobby European Seed Association (ESA), pesticide lobby European Crop Protection Association (ECPA), biotech lobby EuropaBio and chemical lobby CEFIC. CEFIC alone employs around 135 staff and has an annual budget of €40million, making it the single biggest lobby actor in the European Union.

They also get specialised support from lobby consultancies and law firms like Fleishman Hillard, Weber Shandwick, FTI Consulting, Hume Brophy, Hill & Knowlton and Burson-Marsteller. The 'Glyphosate Task Force', led by Monsanto and managed by Hume Brophy, is set on achieving an extension of the market authorisation of highly toxic glyphosate-based weedkillers.



Monsanto and Bayer are also members of industry-funded science platforms like the International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI) or the European Centre For Ecotoxicology and Toxicology of Chemicals (ECETOC), which aim to skew the way products are approved in the industry's favour. 'Product defence companies' like Exponent and Gradient Corp pay scientists to cherry-pick study data that is in their clients' interest and for criticising independent study data that is not. Monsanto, Bayer, CEFIC and ECPA have all been using such services to defend cancer-causing and fertility-damaging crop protection products.

## Patented and weedkiller-addicted GM crops

**A substantial part of Bayer's and Monsanto's business comes from genetically-modified (GM) seeds that have been engineered to tolerate the companies' herbicides.**

Monsanto was the first company to commercially launch weedkiller-tolerant crops with GM soy, maize and oilseed rape varieties made to withstand the toxic glyphosate component in its best-selling herbicide Roundup. Bayer produces its own range of GM varieties resistant to its broad-spectrum weedkiller 'Liberty', which contains glufosinate – which is a similar substance to glyphosate. To market these genetically modified seeds, the corporations claim that smaller amounts of pesticides are needed.



But weedkiller-resistant crops have actually increased the use and quantities of herbicides, especially as many weeds have developed a resistance to glyphosate. As a consequence, farmers have been forced to spray more glyphosate-based pesticides on their crops, as well as additional weedkillers. Monsanto, Bayer and other big agribusiness corporations have developed GM crops that can withstand several different herbicides, which are now necessary to control weed adaptation. This means many agricultural products will have been treated with multiple toxic herbicides before reaching consumers.

The high price and GM patents of herbicide-resistant crops are also problematic, as they force farmers to buy expensive seed licenses every season. The monopolies of big agribusiness corporations like Monsanto, Bayer, Syngenta, Dow and DuPont make it increasingly difficult for farmers to choose non-GM and/ or non-patented seeds.

Mergers of such companies will give even more influence to these already powerful actors, trapping farmers into dependency on their products.

## The BaySanto lobby tool box

Monsanto and Bayer use a wide range of lobby strategies to rig EU pesticide regulation in their favour. From direct lobbying to public relations spin and the corporate capture of science – no tool is too unethical for these two agribusiness giants.

As well as joining forces with similar corporations in industry lobby associations, Bayer and Monsanto both pay huge sums to specialised lobby consultancies and law firms every year to boost their own influencing prowess and push industry-friendly alternatives to policy proposals. But their direct lobbying goes even further; many of the European Commission's advisory expert groups feature several industry representatives who can shape policy recommendations from the start.

The public relations departments working for the companies do their bit to sideline health and environmental concerns around herbicides. They aggressively vilify critics, present the industry's ultimate goal as 'feeding the world', and try their best to 'greenwash' the industry's reputation by framing agribusiness corporations as innovators empowering farmers.

Bayer and Monsanto also co-opt scientific research to protect their profits: to ensure favourable study data, the pesticide producers initiate and monitor public-private research projects, fund scientists to echo their messages as third party voices and hire product defence companies to publish studies that cast doubt on independent research findings.

### Find out more

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