PCBs, Roundup, and Dicamba – Monsanto's Current Problems

They say bad news comes in threes, and biotech giant Monsanto can certainly attest to the truth of that statement right now. Their newest product line, XtendiMax (better known as dicamba), made it to market without proper volatility testing. This refers to the product's tendency to vaporize and travel. Subsequently, dicamba is drifting, causing major damage to neighboring crops, and currently banned in one U.S. state. There have also been two separate instances of newly released documents confirming that Monsanto knew two of their products, PCBs (from 1935 and 1977) and glyphosate, are harmful and continued to defend and sell them in spite of that.

For years, Monsanto has presented unsafe products as safe with little to no repercussion. Yet it is still on track to further dominate the food supply due to the company's merger with Bayer. So why are the agencies charged with regulating food and environmental safety ok with Monsanto's market control in the face of their shady practices?

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Past Indiscretions with PCBs

PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls, were banned pretty much everywhere in 1979 after being linked to cancer and environmental degradation. PCBs began manufacture in 1935, and the first evidence of their toxicity appeared in 1937, after three workers who handled the chemicals died from acute liver damage. Serious health and environmental concerns continue to be reported to this day, even though the largest manufacturer of these, Monsanto, halted their production in 1977.

Monsanto is currently being sued by the state of Washington and eight cities for PCB contamination. Recently released documents have confirmed that Monsanto was aware of the effect of PCBs as early as 1969, eight years before they stopped selling them. A 1969 pollution abatement plan from the company acknowledged the product's risks, stating "…"The evidence proving the persistence of these compounds and their universal presence in the environment is beyond questioning." In another letter from a Monsanto manager in 1975, the company knew that "There is a potential real effect to humans – including death…"

In Monsanto's own words, PCBs are dangerous in more ways than one. Yet they made money and Monsanto is first and foremost a business. But this wouldn't be the only instance of company records showing corporate profits trump health, safety, and environmental concerns.

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Present Problems with Roundup

More court documents exposing Monsanto's behind the scenes manipulations were released by attorneys pursuing claims against the company in regards to the link between Roundup and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Attorneys from the law firm Baum Hedlund Aristei Goldman released more than 700 pages of internal documents, detailing Monsanto's behind the scenes activities. Numerous emails, texts, and other documents confirm that employees at Monsanto ghostwrote and manipulated scientific studies and expert panel discussions, failed to disclose conflicts of interest, discredited multiple negative glyphosate studies, and colluded with the Environmental Protection Agency. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) labeled glyphosate as probably carcinogenic to humans in 2015, but it's clear from the recently released

documents that Monsanto has known this since before 2008.

These documents also make Monsanto's strategy for avoiding regulation clear: government collusion. Many of the documents released are communications with high ranking individuals at the Environmental Protection Agency, imploring them to delay scientific reviews of glyphosate multiple times. Monsanto's has a clear modus operandi once they learn their products cause human harm – muddy the scientific waters, defend it furiously, and make as much money as possible. Their experience with PCBs was a learning experience. The lesson? Get the agencies regulating you to do the dirty work.

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Future Uncertainty with Dicamba

The Environmental Protection Agency approved Monsanto's newest version of dicamba, XtendiMax, in November of 2016. Poised to replace glyphosate now that many weeds are developing resistance to that product, many farmers instead experienced serious crop loss after illegal versions of it used prior to that release drifted onto their fields from neighboring farms. With the product officially released, Monsanto is now facing a class actions lawsuits from farmers reporting severe losses for the second year in a row.

Testimony from researchers, regulators, and a company employee indicate that Monsanto used its influence to bring the product to market without all of the proper tests, including a proper volatility test. In fact, testing contracts for the product explicitly forbade it. Yet the EPA approved the product without it.

Arkansas was the only state to ask for additional testing. Monsanto denied that request. Arkansas has now banned dicamba, and other states are now assessing damage from the herbicide

for the second year in a row. This damage occurs when dicamba drifted to other, non-modified crops, the exact scenario further testing could have predicted. A class action lawsuit is pending.

Is It Too Late?

Monsanto wields incredible influence with government agencies, scientists, and researchers. This allows the company to continually deny and create confusion around health and environmental damages that their products are actually causing. And it's scary. What chance do we have when those charged with upholding regulations created to protect the public are on the Monsanto Christmas card list?

It took nearly a decade from when Monsanto privately acknowledged the damage PCBs were causing for regulatory agencies to do something about it. The new formulation of dicamba, XtendiMax, has been on the market for less than a year and has been banned in both Arkansas and Missouri. The times are changing.

Recommended Reading:

- *Total Nutrition – Make your own Homemade Multivitamin and Mineral Formula*
- *How to Detoxify From Antibiotics and Other Chemical Antimicrobials*
- *What Causes Chronic Inflammation, and How To Stop It For Good*

Sources:

- *Scant Oversight, Corporate Secrecy Preceded U.S. Weed Killer Crisis* – Reuter's
- *Monsanto Sold Banned Chemicals for Years Despite Known Health Risks, Archives Reveal* – The Guardian
- *New 'Monsanto Papers' Add To Questions Of Regulatory Collusion, Scientific Mischief* – Huffington Post

- *Monsanto Weed Killer Roundup Faces New Doubts on Safety in Unsealed Documents* – NY Times
- *Monsanto Roundup Lawsuit* – Baum Hedlund Aristei Goldman
- *Class Lawsuit Takes Aim at Dicamba Producers, Accuses Monsanto Reps of Condoning Illegal Spraying* – St. Louis Post Dispatch