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Monsanto is the hideous tree that hides the forest

How Bayer buying Monsanto is more than just another merger

The Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament have always sought to make the European Union a safe place for people and to prevent dangerous substances finding their way into the environment and the food we eat. The acquisition of Monsanto by Bayer threatens to undermine current safeguards, and this is why we strongly oppose the potential deal.

Monsanto is one of the most hated companies on earth. Which other enterprise has a yearly worldwide march against it? And even an international tribunal?

The reasons for this hatred are numerous and legitimate. Monsanto is known to have produced and sold some of the most dangerous toxic substances^[1] for widespread use in agriculture, and in doing so has contributed to disastrous impacts for the environment and human health.

A lot of these products have been banned, but traces of some can still be found in the air, the soil and water. Some are still being commercialised: see the raging scientific debate on the potential carcinogenic effects of [glyphosate](#) on human beings. But Monsanto is also accused of many other crimes: contributing to the steep decline of both wild and cultivated biodiversity, contributing to a globalized food system that starves people instead of feeding them, hampering the freedom of research when scientific findings go against their economic interests, for example.

All of these accusations have been confirmed by the [Monsanto Tribunal](#), a civil society initiative composed of five international judges, tasked with examining the effects of Monsanto's activities on human rights and the environment. Although this tribunal has no investigative powers, nor are its opinions binding, the advisory opinion it delivered on Monsanto's actions was based on legal considerations grounded in international human rights and humanitarian law. They are arguments that will very probably be used in the future by citizens aggrieved by Monsanto to sue the company at national level.

Serious inequality

However, these were not the only conclusions of the Monsanto Tribunal: the judges also underlined the

serious inequality between the rights of companies at international level and those of citizens who may seek to sue these companies and be compensated for damages inflicted by them. This is a conclusion that is also reached in [a very recent report](#) by Hilal Elver, the UN's Special Rapporteur on the right to food, and the UN's Special Rapporteur on hazardous substances, Baskut Tuncak.

Their report also notes that the fact that giant agrochemical enterprises manage both the pesticide and the seed sector leads to “serious conflicts of interest”, and that “the pesticide industry’s efforts to influence policymakers and regulators have obstructed reforms and paralysed global pesticide restrictions”. In a nutshell, agrochemical companies have a disproportionate power when it comes to justice and to law-making processes.

The Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament have always sought to make the European Union a safe place for citizens and to safeguard against dangerous substances, both in the environment and in food. This is why we strongly oppose the acquisition of Monsanto by Bayer, announced last September by the German drugs and chemical company. The corporate giant born from this arrangement would be a super-powerful "too big to fail" lobbyist, fighting for an industrial-scale farming model that the majority of citizens don't want and won't benefit from. The deal still has to be validated by the competition authorities, and thus can still be stopped.

We recently appealed to Commissioner Vestager, head of DG Competition, to prevent this new concentration of an already over-concentrated market in [a letter sent on 24 April](#). We also called on Bayer's stakeholders to renounce the deal, via both [a cross-party letter](#) and a [demonstration in front of Bayer's Brussels offices](#) on 27 April. Ultimately for Bayer, instead of trying to compete with the other mega mergers in the agrochemical sector, wouldn't it be a better and more profitable longer-term strategy to invest in agroecology?

[\[1\]](#) For example: the dreaded agent orange and diverse PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl) based products

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