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Five reasons not to allow the Bayer - Monsanto merger

Why the Commission should stop this "merger from hell"

In September 2016, German drugs and chemicals group Bayer, and US company Monsanto, owner of the glyphosate-based herbicide Roundup and of the only GM plant currently authorised for cultivation in the EU (Mon 810 Maize), announced their intention to merge. If authorised by the European Commission, this would create, in the Commission's own words, *"the world's largest integrated pesticides and seeds company",* and have, as explained below, devastating consequences. **Join us in calling on Margrete Vestager, Commissioner for Competition, to stop this "merger from hell" by signing this petition!**

1. It's bad for farmers

This transaction would take place in industries that are already extremely concentrated, as illustrated by the recent mergers of Dow and Dupont and Syngenta and ChemChina. In 2014, **only four companies were already controlling close to 95%** of the vegetable seed market in the EU, two of these companies being Bayer and Monsanto. Moreover, Monsanto and Bayer are marketing the two most popular herbicides in the EU: glyphosate and glufosinate ammonium, respectively. Together, they would hold 24% of the world pesticide market and 29% of the world seed market.

EU farmers' organisations, as well as their counterparts from the USA and Canada have already expressed strong concerns about this operation. Indeed, this merger would only add to an already impossible economic situation in the farming sector. Total input costs for EU farmers climbed on average by almost 40% between 2000 and 2010, while farm gate prices (prices paid to farmers for their goods) increased on average by less than 25%, according to Eurostat.

Giving more power to agribusiness will only impoverish EU farmers further. Someone stands to make a huge amount of money from this and it's certainly not the farmers, who are already squeezed between non-remunerative prices for their produce and rising input costs, in an input-dependent system.

2. It's bad for food diversity

The steady concentration of power into the hands of a small number of companies over the last century has

already dramatically reduced the diversity of seeds proposed to and used by farmers, which means less diversity in our fields (leading to environmental problems) and in our food (leading to health problems). Commercial breeders only work on 137 different crops (among the 7000 domesticated plant species) and maize receives 45% of all private R&D spending.

Merging companies also means the increasing concentration of patents in the hands of just a few major players. The world's major agro-chemical companies have a clear strategy - widely denounced by NGOs - of trying to patent as many of their seeds as possible, even when they are issued from classical breeding techniques. In fact, some even try to patent seeds that were previously bred (but not patented) by their competitors, selected by farmers themselves or, worst of all, which are naturally present in the environment. By doing so, not only are they effectively trying to put a patent on nature itself, they are also closing down legitimate possibilities for research and reducing the options of farmers and small seed producers - unless they are willing to pay a "reasonable fee" to the owners of the patents.

Handing over the rights to our food to a handful of giant multinational companies is clearly not a smart move - and even less so when those companies buy each other to increase their stranglehold on the market.

3. It's bad for the planet

Monsanto might be the favourite target of activists around the world, but Bayer, whose EU market share is larger than Monsanto's, has in fact the same marketing approach: selling seeds from plants that are "highly productive", **but only when used in combination with pesticides and herbicides that they also produce.** As Bayer CEO Werner Baumann, told the newspaper *Politico*: "We have long respected Monsanto's business and share their vision".

These plants may be issued from GMOs (such as the numerous glyphosate-resistant GM maize and soybeans sold by Monsanto), or come from more or less classical breeding (like the Clearfield oilseed rape from Bayer), but the idea behind them is the same: farmers have to buy new seeds every year, along with

the chemical product that goes with them. This system means that the use of pesticides (and especially herbicide) has skyrocketed, as was clearly proven for glyphosate, and leads to well-documented negative impacts on our ecosystems - for example the development of herbicide-resistant "super weeds", water, soil and air pollution, declining bee populations, as well as other insects and birds, etc.

This orientation is not meant to change, as both Monsanto and Bayer have shown a strong interest in the set of new biotechnologies known as new breeding techniques.

In this context, the merger would be a disaster, as the corporate giant born from this arrangement would be a super-powerful "too big to fail" lobbyist, making any shift in the food and farming model towards a more environmentally friendly one much more difficult.

4. It's bad for your health

In addition to the problematic loss of food diversity, which impacts human health, this merger might affect citizens more directly. Several products produced and commercialised by Monsanto and Bayer have been accused of having extremely noxious effects on human health: endocrine disruptors impacting the human reproductive system (…), probable carcinogenic herbicides (glyphosate, glufosinate), the list is long and for each product banned, a new one is put on the market that is supposedly safe, until it is found out not to be.

The toll is especially high for farmers and their families, who suffer not only from the continuing exposure to small doses of some of these products through food consumption, but also from acute reactions to the pesticides they use (see the Triskalia trial or the case of Paul François against Monsanto).

There is a certain irony to the fact that, by acquiring Monsanto, Bayer would at the same time become the biggest EU enterprise in the pesticides and pharmaceutical product sectors, the two branches being managed under the same executive board.

5. It's a possible cop-out for Monsanto

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:

- commercialising some of the most dangerous toxic substances for widespread use in agriculture (a lot of which have now been banned)
- contributing to a steep loss of biodiversity
- pushing a globalized food system that starves people instead of feeding (!) them
- hampering the freedom of research when scientific findings are not in their interests…

All of these accusations have been confirmed by the Monsanto Tribunal, a non-binding civil society initiative composed of five international judges, but Monsanto is also facing several trials in national courts, and more are pending.

Probably the most important of these is a combination of lawsuits filed by people from around the United States who allege that exposure to Monsanto's Roundup herbicide caused them or their loved ones to develop non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. This trial has already allowed the court to obtain and publish

documents showing shady actions against scientists and NGOs, and a disturbing level of collusion with certain officials.

It is now feared that part, or all of these ongoing lawsuits might go extinct after the merger, leaving the plaintiffs with even fewer solutions than they have today.

Help us working for another agricultural model in the EU!

The Greens/EFA are supporting a low input, environmentally friendly agriculture, made by technically and financially independent farmers. This can be achieved through a fairer CAP and appropriate regulations, but our chances to achieve this aim will significantly decrease if this merger happens.

Help stop this "merger from hell", tell EU leaders you don't support it, by signing this petition!

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