

# OEFFA vs. Monsanto: Protecting Ohio's Farmers



## The Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association

Promoting and supporting  
sustainable agriculture since 1979

### Fighting Back: What You Can Do

#### Support OEFFA, Get Involved

Become a member, make a donation, or learn more about grassroots volunteering.

Go to [www.oeffa.org](http://www.oeffa.org), email [mackenzie@oeffa.org](mailto:mackenzie@oeffa.org), or call (614) 421-2022.

#### Write a Letter to the Editor

Tell decision-makers that you want consumer choice preserved, GE foods labeled, and organic farmers protected from contamination and lawsuits.

#### Support Organic Farms

Because GE products are not required to be labeled, avoid them by buying organic, since organic producers are prohibited from using GE seed or feed. Support organic farmers and those that preserve heirloom seed varieties. To find farmers in your area, go to [www.oeffa.org](http://www.oeffa.org).

#### Learn More

To find out more, go to Millions Against Monsanto at <http://organicconsumers.org/> or The Center for Food Safety at [www.centerforfoodsafety.org](http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org). For the PUBPAT legal complaint, go to <http://www.pubpat.org/assets/files/seed/OSGATA-v-Monsanto-Complaint.pdf>.

### Monsanto: A Brief History

Since 1901, Monsanto has created some of the world's most dangerous and controversial chemical products, including DDT, PCBs, Agent Orange, and genetically engineered bovine growth hormone, known as rBGH or rBST.

In 1976, Monsanto launched their glyphosate-based weedkiller Roundup, which quickly became the world's most popular herbicide. In 1996, Monsanto engineered plants with glyphosate-resistant genes, allowing farmers to spray Roundup onto their fields during the growing season without harming the "Roundup Ready" crop. Promised higher yields, labor savings, and lower weed pressure, genetically engineered (GE) seeds have been widely adopted by U.S. farmers.

Today, Monsanto is the world's largest seed company. Over 80 percent of the soybeans, corn, cotton, sugar beets, and canola grown in the U.S. contain Monsanto's patented genes.

### Monsanto's Aggressive Enforcement of Patents

Non-GE seeds and crops are vulnerable to contamination at almost every step of the production process: from seed contamination or cross-pollination, by coming into contact with contaminated harvest and post-harvest equipment, or during processing, transportation, or storage. The fact that Monsanto's patented genes are nearly ubiquitous, and the USDA has deregulated their use, compounds the problem.

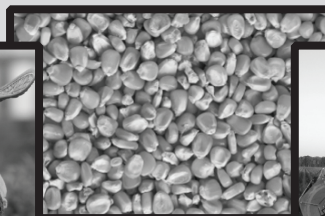
Despite this, Monsanto zealously enforces its seed patents. Monsanto investigates approximately 500 farmers each year for patent infringement. Between 1997 and 2010, Monsanto filed 144 lawsuits against farmers in 27 states for alleged patent infringement. And, Monsanto has an annual budget of \$10 million and a staff of 75 devoted to investigating and prosecuting farmers for "seed piracy."

### Challenging Monsanto's Practice of Intimidation

In 2011, on behalf of 83 family farmers, seed businesses, and organic agricultural organizations, including OEFFA, the Public Patent Foundation (PUBPAT) filed suit against Monsanto in federal court.

The plaintiffs, representing more than 270,000 members, are preemptively asking the court for protection from being accused of patent infringement should they ever become contaminated by Monsanto's GE seed.

"On behalf of farmers who must live under this cloud of uncertainty and risk, we are compelled to ask the Court to put an end to this unconscionable business practice," said Dr. Carol Goland, OEFFA's Executive Director.





# In Our Fields and On Our Plates: Ten Dangers of Genetically Engineered Foods

**Seed and Crop Contamination**—GE and non-GE seeds cannot coexist. Once released into the environment, pollen from GE crops can contaminate organic and non-GE crops. As a result, farmers of organic canola—a crop at particularly high risk of contamination—have stopped growing this important crop. Corn, cotton, sugar beets, and alfalfa are also at risk, not only from pollen drift, but also from contamination during storage, transporting, and processing.

**Organic Farmers at Risk**—Because GE crops are prohibited under the organic label, if organic fields are contaminated by cross-fertilization or organic livestock consume contaminated feed, a farmer cannot sell those products as organic. Alfalfa contamination is particularly dangerous for organic farmers. Alfalfa is used in many organic farmers' crop rotations and as a key feed for livestock.

**Reduced Consumer Choice**—Monsanto, along with a handful of other multinational corporations, control the vast majority of the commercial seed supply, and by extension, exert tremendous influence over what we eat. And, as GE crops contaminate non-GE crops, consumers will have even fewer options. Moreover, GE foods are not labeled, making it difficult for consumers to know which foods contain genetically engineered ingredients.

**Ownership of Nature**—Ethically, genetically engineered foods offer many challenges. Seed, once common property of past, present, and future generations, has been privatized, patented, and made into a corporate intellectual property right. GE seed commodifies life and turns a renewable resource into a non-renewable, non-reproducing product. Furthermore, many people believe that the transfer of genes between species is unnatural and unethical.

**GE Foods Not Shown Safe to Eat**—The scientific literature on long-term safety is divided, but many of the studies arguing that GE food is safe were conducted by the biotechnology companies that commercialized the crops. Monsanto has systematically prevented rigorous independent scientific research on GE foods by using patent rights to restrict access to seed. The health effects of GE foods could take decades to become known, just as it took decades for the damaging effects of trans-fats to be recognized.

**GE Foods Do Nothing to Feed the World**—Despite Monsanto's promises that genetic engineering would help feed a hungry world, any yield gains attributable to biotechnology have been modest at best. These results are not surprising, given that GE seeds were developed with herbicide resistance in mind, not yields, drought tolerance, or disease resistance. Furthermore, many GE crops have been developed for livestock feed, biofuel, and for use in high fructose corn syrup, for example, not to improve human nutrition.

**The Rise of Super Weeds**—Much like the overuse of antibiotics has created antibiotic-resistant super germs, the pervasive use of glyphosate has created weeds resistant to glyphosate, including pigweed, horseweed, and giant ragweed. Farmers are now having to resort to more labor-intensive weed management strategies and more toxic and complex mixtures of herbicides to combat these weeds, creating a dangerous chemical treadmill.

**Pesticides, Herbicides, and Human Health**—GE seeds are directly responsible for the increased use of pesticides and herbicides. GE crops require over 26 percent more pounds of pesticides per acre than conventional varieties. A common herbicide, glyphosate, has been linked to non-Hodgkin lymphoma, endocrine disruption, multiple myeloma, DNA damage, immune suppression, and miscarriage.

**Global Economic Market Loss**—At least 35 countries have laws in place that impose labeling or import restrictions on GE food, including the European Union (EU), China, Australia, Russia, and Japan, which receives 20 percent of U.S. food exports. Within just a few years of the introduction of GE crops in the U.S., almost the entire \$300 million in annual U.S. corn exports to the EU disappeared, and the U.S. share of the world soy market decreased.

**GE Seeds Encourage Reliance on Fossil Fuels**—GE seeds are tightly linked to the use of herbicides and pesticides made from petroleum products which contribute to global climate change. At a time when diversity and resiliency are needed to adapt to the effects of climate change, including extreme and unpredictable changes in weather, GE technology offers just the opposite—a reduction in crop diversity.