

Contamination and Bio-Pollution: The Criminality of the GM Biotech Industry

By [Colin Todhunter](#)

Global Research, March 01, 2014

Theme: [Biotechnology and GMO](#)

There is currently a battle waging across the planet over genetically modified (GM) crops. It seems like not a month goes by when a new report is released on the health, environmental or productivity aspects of GM organisms. The GM biotech industry tries to assure governments and the public about the safety and efficacy of their products, while study after study calls into question its claims.

The industry has succeeded in getting its GM foods onto the commercial market in the US largely due to its political leverage within government and regulatory authorities (1). However, Europe and elsewhere have so far not been the pushovers that the industry and the US State Department, which actively promotes the US GM biotech sector courtesy of the taxpayer (2), thought they would. The sector continues to push at the doors of Europe and India but is meeting stiff resistance.

And there is good reason for this resistance; one reason (among many) being that the introduction of GM crops leads to an increase in the use of the herbicide glyphosate (3). This is of concern because glyphosate could be linked to a range of health problems and diseases, including Parkinson's, infertility and cancers, according to a peer-reviewed report from 2013, published in the scientific journal *Entropy*. The study concluded that residues of glyphosate have been found in food, and these residues enhance the damaging effects of other food-borne chemical residues and toxins in the environment and disrupt normal body functions and induce disease (4). Other evidence from Argentina shows that as GM crops have become more prevalent, the use of glyphosate has spiraled as have cancer rates and birth defects (5).

The GM debate may ultimately not be decided by scientific debate or on the pages of journals, however. The battle could be lost for those opposing GM crops by default, or to be more specific, by the flagrant contamination of our food supply – and our air and water as well.

Contamination by all means necessary

Don Westfall, biotech industry consultant and vice-president of Promar International some 13 years ago, was quoted by the *Toronto Star* on 9 January 2001 as saying that the hope of the GM industry is that over time the market is so flooded with GM organisms that there's nothing you can do about it; you just sort of surrender. However, Westfall did not go far enough. It is not just a vague hope. It's a deliberate strategy by the industry.

Genetically engineered wheat is not approved to be grown for commercial use in the US or anywhere else in the world. Yet last year the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that unapproved GE wheat had been found growing in an Oregon wheat field.

Since 1994, Monsanto has conducted 279 field trials of RoundUp Ready wheat over more than 4,000 acres of land in 16 US states (6). The USDA has admitted that Monsanto's GMO experiments from 1998 to 2005 were held in open wheat fields. The genetically engineered wheat escaped and found its way into commercial wheat fields in Oregon (and possibly 15 other states), causing self-replicating genetic pollution that now taints the entire US wheat industry.

Prior to this, in 2006 the USDA granted marketing approval of genetically-engineered Liberty Link 601 of Bayer CropScience. (GE) rice variety following its illegal contamination of the food supply and rice exports (7). The USDA effectively sanctioned an 'approval-by-contamination' policy.

In India, back in 2005, biologist Pushpa Bhargava alleged that there were reports that unapproved varieties of several genetically modified crops were being sold to farmers. And Arun Shrivastava wrote in 2008 that illegal genetically modified okra had been planted in India and that poor farmers had been offered lucrative deals to plant 'special seed' of all sorts of vegetables (7). He asked: who knows at how many places illegal genetically engineered rice have been planted? It's a valid concern given that the story of open air trials of GM crops in India is a story of blatant violations of biosafety norms, hasty approvals, a lack of monitoring abilities, general apathy towards the hazards of contamination and a lack of institutional oversight mechanisms (8). Concerns have also been expressed in Europe over the contamination of basmati rice exported by India (9).

Without doubt, though, the most alarming findings associated with contamination pertaining to GM crops come from new research. It shows that we do not have to eat GM food in order to be adversely affected by it. The findings have been released on the GreenMedInfo website, where it is argued that the GM farming system has made exposure to Monsanto's Roundup herbicide (glyphosate) a daily fact of people's existence in the US (10).

A new study from the US Geological Survey, accepted for publication online ahead of print in the journal Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry, reveals that Roundup and its toxic degradation byproduct AMPA were found in over 75% of the air and rain samples tested from Mississippi in 2007.

This study highlights the extent to which GM farming has altered daily exposure to chemicals – even the rain and air people in the US now breathe contains physiologically relevant and potentially health damaging levels of glyphosate 'fall out' from what Sayer Ji of GreenMedInfo calls "the war against any plant not part of the monocultured, genetically engineered system of production."

Regardless of the contamination of non-GM crops by GM crops, Ji argues that findings like these reveal just how illusory the perception of choice and health freedom is when it comes to the GM/non-GM debate and people's right to avoid harm from GM organisms by refusing to buy or consume them. Ji says that the environment is becoming so saturated with the 'fall out' from ever-expanding GM agricultural/agrichemical farming that even if we find a way to avoid eating GM-contaminated food, we will still have to deal with its adverse health effects.

If we are to believe Don Westfall, at this point we simply accept things and surrender. But that depends on how much you value your life and health, your children's lives and health and the environment around you. Be informed and take action:

In Europe: <http://www.stopthecrop.org/> and <http://corporateeurope.org/>

In India: <http://indiagminfo.org/>

Notes

- 1) <http://rense.com/general33/fd.htm>
- 2) http://documents.foodandwaterwatch.org/doc/Biotech_Report_US.pdf
- 3) <http://www.globalresearch.ca/monsanto-roundup-glyphosate-weedkiller-in-our-food-and-water/5339244>
- 4) <http://www.nationofchange.org/study-links-monsanto-s-roundup-autism-parkinson-s-and-alzheimer-s-1367764115>
- 5) <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/1-147561-2010-06-14.html>
- 6) <http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-monsanto-engame-genetically-engineered-wheat-on-oregon-farm-contamination-across-north-america/5337514>
- 7) <http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-death-of-rice-in-india/9562>
- 8) http://indiagminfo.org/?page_id=175
- 9) <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/india-denies-gmo-contamination-basmati>
- 10) <http://www.greenmedinfo.com/blog/roundup-weedkiller-found-75-air-and-rain-samples-gov-study-finds>

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Articles by: [Colin Todhunter](#)

About the author:

Colin Todhunter is an extensively published independent writer and former social policy researcher. Originally from the UK, he has spent many years in India. His website is www.colintodhunter.com
https://twitter.com/colin_todhunter

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