

Monsanto Expands in the Caribbean: Puerto Rico is the Testing Ground

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Monsanto is the global multinational corporation that has been expanding its operation in the Caribbean nation of Puerto Rico. It has been using Puerto Rico as an experiment for its Genetically Modified Seeds (GMOs).

According to a 2011 report called “El experimento Caribeno de Monsanto” (Monsanto’s Caribbean Experiment) by the journalist Eliván Martínez for the Center of Investigative Journalism of Puerto Rico:

There is a situation in the works here that the government is hiding and supporting: the island is an important center for eight companies, seven of them multinationals, who develop the first generations of genetically modified seeds to distribute to the United States and around the world. The possessions of these corporations include public and private farms, mostly on the best cultivable lands on the south of the island, where in the last century the empire of his majesty, the sugarcane, was in charge, held up by great landowners who wanted the land for themselves.

 *The majority of these lands take up more than the limit of 500 acres, which is the maximum permitted by the Constitution of Puerto Rico, while they receive attractive benefits from the government and they enjoy the Ley de Promocion y Desarrollo de Empresas de Biotecnologia Agricola de 2009 (Law for the Promotion and Development of Agricultural Biotechnology Companies, 2009) [es], custom-made to favor them.*

The Colonial government of Puerto Rico supports the project as they do with every project that involves the United States government. Monsanto is a major corporation involved in producing genetically modified foods or genetically modified organisms (GMO). They have been the targeted for good reason because it is one of the most dangerous corporations in the world that poses a threat to our health, environment and for our future concerning our food supply. Doctors, researchers, activists, environmentalists, governments (Poland and Hungary) and international organizations have been battling Monsanto since its creation. Monsanto has produced products including Agent Orange, dioxin and genetically modified seeds (GMO’s). According to Dr. Joseph M. Mercola of the alternative medicine website [Mercola.com](#) wrote an article titled “Banned in Germany, But You’re Probably Still Eating It.” He wrote:

Why GM Foods should be Labeled with a Skull and Crossbones

Monsanto wants you to simply trust them because they’re “experts” and because their industry-funded studies “prove” their GM foods are safe. But these same experts also

told you PCB's, Agent Orange, and DDT was safe, and we now know those claims were far from accurate.

Of course, in terms of reliability, there's a big difference between corporate science, which tends to primarily favor and support corporate interests, and independent science, performed without preconceived bias. Scientists have, in fact, discovered a number of health problems related to genetically modified foods, including:

- *An analysis of 19 animal studies revealed that nearly 10 percent of blood, urine, organ and other parameters tested were significantly influenced by GMOs, with the livers and kidneys faring the worst.*
- *A 2009 Brazilian study discovered that female rats fed GM soy for 15 months showed significant changes in their uterus and reproductive cycle, compared to rats fed organic soy or those raised without soy.*
- *A study performed by Irina Ermakova with the Russian National Academy of Sciences reported that more than half the babies from mother rats fed GM soy died within three weeks, while the death rate in the non-GM soy group was only 10 percent. Additionally, the babies in the GM group were smaller, and, worst of all, could not reproduce. In a telling coincidence, after Ermakova's feeding trials were completed, her laboratory started feeding all the rats in the facility a commercial rat chow using GM soy. Within two months, the infant mortality facility-wide reached 55 percent.*
- *Milk treated with the Monsanto-developed genetically engineered bovine growth hormone (rBGH) contains higher levels of insulin-like growth factor (IGF-1), a hormone linked to breast, prostate and colon cancers in humans.*

Dr. Mercola is one of the main physicians currently battling Monsanto along with GMO expert Jeffrey Smith of the *Institute for Responsible Technology* and many others that has produced evidence that GMO seeds are a threat to the human species. Puerto Rico is the new target for Monsanto. In a 2011 *McClatchy* article titled "Puerto Rico Will Get Boost from Monsanto Expansion" reported that:

"Monsanto, the agricultural technology company, plans to announce on Wednesday a \$4.3 million expansion of its research and development labs in Puerto Rico, a boost to the island's economy.

Monsanto executives plan to expand one of the company's two Puerto Rico work sites, constructing a 20,000-square-foot home for new research and development laboratories. Monsanto's research on the island focuses on corn and cotton, and it also grows corn and soybean seeds for the mainland United States"

The propaganda orchestrated by Monsanto is disingenuous to say the least. The Puerto Rican government and Monsanto's claim that the island's economy not only will grow due to its expansion but will be used as a testing ground with new research facilities. Yes, it does create jobs, but at the cost of the Puerto Rican people health. Dr. Mercola's article just mentioned stated the facts on Monsanto's so-called "benefits" to the local food supply:

Virtually all of the claims of benefit of GM crops - increased yields, more food production, controlled pests and weeds, reductions in chemical use in agriculture, drought-tolerant seeds - have not materialized.

The Global Citizens Report on the State of GMOs states:

- *Contrary to the claim of feeding the world, genetic engineering has not increased the yield of a single crop.*
- *Herbicide tolerant (Roundup Ready) crops were supposed to control weeds and Bt crops were intended to control pests. Instead of controlling weeds and pests, GE crops have led to the emergence of super weeds and super pests ... Herbicide resistant crops such as Roundup Ready cotton can create the risk of herbicide resistant “superweeds” by transferring the herbicide resistance to weeds.*
- *Despite claims that genetically modified organisms (GMOs) will lower the levels of chemicals (pesticides and herbicides) used, quite the opposite has occurred, with 1.6 billion pounds of glyphosate (the active ingredient in Roundup) being applied to American soil in 2007 alone. This is of great concern both because of the negative impacts of these chemicals on ecosystems and humans, and because there is the danger that increased chemical use will cause pests and weeds to develop resistance, requiring even more chemicals in order to manage them.*
- *Monsanto has been claiming that through genetic engineering it can breed crops for drought tolerance and other climate-resilient traits. This is a false promise.*
- *Among the false claims made by Monsanto and the Biotechnology industry is that GE foods are safe. However, there are enough independent studies to show that GE foods can cause severe health damage.*

Thanks to glyphosate, the active ingredient in Monsanto’s non-selective, broad-spectrum herbicide Roundup, that is sprayed on massive acreages of GM Roundup Ready soybeans, cotton, and corn grown in the United States each and every year, super weeds are growing at an alarming rate. It’s estimated that more than 130 types of weeds spanning 40 U.S. states are now herbicide-resistant, and the superweeds are showing no signs of stopping. In fact, the situation is getting progressively worse.

In a Brazilian study in 2009 found that female rats that were fed GM soy for 15 months saw changes in their uterus and reproductive cycle compared to rats fed organic soy or not were led to reproductive disorders. In Jeffrey Smith’s article “Don’t Eat These Beans If You’re Thinking of Having Children” stated the facts clearly back in 2010. Smith wrote:

The changes in the rat uterus and ovulation cycle are by no means a smoking gun. But they are now part of a pattern of multiple reproductive disorders found in GMO feeding studies.

Professor Vyvyan Howard, a toxico-pathologist of the University of Ulster, says, “Several new hazards can now be identified.” The growing body of research showing problems, he says, “provides ample evidence that the producers of GMO crops are not performing risk assessments for some of the hazards that independent scientists are identifying and testing.”

Dr. Howard, who specializes in the effects of toxins on the fetus and infants, asks, “What will be the effect on the fetus in the womb of women eating these foods? This needs to be tested.”

The few tests that have been done on animals are more than sobering. In April 2010, researchers at Russia's Institute of Ecology and Evolution of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the National Association for Gene Security found that after feeding hamsters GM soy for two years over three generations, by the third generation most lost the ability to have babies.

They also suffered slower growth, a high mortality rate among the pups, and a high incidence of a rare phenomenon of hair growing inside their mouths.

At the Institute of Ecology and Evolution of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the National Association for Gene Security study proved the fact that Genetically Modified Soy has contributed to sterilization of hamsters unable to produce babies over future generations that were steadily fed GM Soy over a long period of time. It is a significant study that only proves GM soy and other related products can cause sterilization. Jeffrey Smith continued his analysis:

Central Iowa Farmer Jerry Rosman also had trouble with pigs and cows becoming sterile. Some of his pigs even had false pregnancies or gave birth to bags of water. After months of investigations and testing, he finally traced the problem to GM corn feed.

Every time a newspaper, magazine, or TV show reported Jerry's problems, he would receive calls from more farmers complaining of livestock sterility on their farm, linked to GM corn.

Researchers at Baylor College of Medicine accidentally discovered that rats raised on corncob bedding "neither breed nor exhibit reproductive behavior." Tests on the corn material revealed two compounds that stopped the sexual cycle in females "at concentrations approximately two-hundredfold lower than classical phytoestrogens."

One compound also curtailed male sexual behavior and both substances contributed to the growth of breast and prostate cancer cell cultures. Researchers found that the amount of the substances varied with GM corn varieties. The crushed corncob used at Baylor was likely shipped from central Iowa, near the farm of Jerry Rosman and others complaining of sterile livestock.

In Haryana, India, a team of investigating veterinarians report that buffalo consuming GM cottonseed suffer from infertility, as well as frequent abortions, premature deliveries, and prolapsed uteruses. Many adult and young buffalo have also died mysteriously.

Biotech advocates usually deny or try to discredit the evidence, and often attack scientists who discover it. But they rarely call for follow-up studies. With little or no money to follow up on these findings, we won't know for sure if GMOs are the cause, or if it is glyphosate, or something else. But numerous medical doctors aren't waiting for more research. They are telling their patients, especially those pregnant or planning to have kids, just say no to GMOs.

So if you were still eating GMOs before you read this, perhaps it's time to take the doctors' advice.

Jeffrey Smith's advice should not be taken lightly. Companies such as Monsanto poses a

danger to Puerto Rico's food supply and its people in more ways than one tends to think. It contributes to numerous health problems that include genetically engineered bovine growth hormone (rBGH) that actually contains high levels of a substance called "*insulin-like growth factor*" or IGF-1. Keep in mind that IGF-1 is a hormone that has been linked to breast, colon and prostate cancers. GMO tests also conclude that the team of investigating veterinarians report mentioned earlier that buffalo's who consumed GM cottonseed suffered from infertility, abortions, premature deliveries and problems with their uterus. Many buffalos have also died without any formal explanations. GMOs have created changes that have led to reproductive disorders in rat uterus and ovulation cycles. It does not lower the levels of dangerous chemicals such as pesticides and herbicides.

In the economic sense, it does not produce crops in case of a major drought or a natural disaster was to occur. Herbicide tolerant or *Roundup Ready* crops are supposed to control weeds and Bt crops. It is intended to control pests but it has led to the growth of super weeds and super pests instead creating more problems for farmers. Monsanto is now in operation in Puerto Rico contributing to more health problems that includes sterilization, infertility, cancers and chemicals that would destroy the remaining farms that produce crops for local and US markets that would put a strain on its already fragile economy.

Monsanto creates two main problems for the Puerto Rican people; first it contributes to more health problems that would jeopardize population growth and secondly, it would destroy whatever is left of the agricultural industry because its seed-and-herbicide business forces farmers into a system of economic dependence. Farmers will also not be able to return to traditional farming after their farmland has been infected and destroyed with Monsanto's "Roundup Ready".

Protests in Puerto Rico and around the world are taking place with such organizations as 'Puerto Rican Organization of Eco-Organic Agriculture' who is allied with the 'Campesina/Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones de Campo' (Latin American Coordinator of Field Organizations) against Monsanto.

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