

Six Questions for Monsanto

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Monsanto may not be the largest company in the world. Or the worst. But the St. Louis, Mo. biotech giant has become the poster child for all that's wrong with our industrial food and farming system.

With 21,000 employees in 66 countries and \$15 billion in revenue, Monsanto is a biotech industry heavyweight. The St. Louis, Mo.-based monopolizer of seeds is the poster child for an industry that is the source of at least one-third of global anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, and is largely responsible for the depletion of soil, water and biodiversity. Not to mention the company's marginalization—and sometimes terrorization—of millions of small farmers.

Since the early 20th century, Monsanto has marketed highly toxic products that have contaminated the environment and permanently sickened or killed thousands of people around the world. The most toxic of its products include:

- PCBs: [one](#) of the 12 persistent organic pollutants (POPs), which affect human and animal fertility
- 2,4,5 T (2,4-D): [a component](#) of Agent Orange containing dioxin which was used by the US military during the Vietnam war and continues to be a major cause of birth defects and cancers
- Lasso: [an herbicide](#) now banned in Europe
- Roundup: the most widely used herbicide in the world, cause of one of the biggest health and environmental tragedies in modern history. This highly toxic weed killer, sprayed on GMO crops including soybeans, corn and rapeseed for animal feed or for the production of biofuels, was recently [classified](#) as a probable human carcinogen by the World Health Organization.

In a rare exception, Monsanto was recently [ordered](#) to pay \$46.5 million to compensate victims of its PCB poisoning. Sometimes the company [settles](#) out of court, to avoid having to admit to any “wrongdoing.”

But for the most part, thanks to the multinational's powerful influence over U.S. politicians, Monsanto has been able to poison with impunity.

It's time for the citizens of the world to fight back. On October 15-16, in The Hague, Netherlands—the International City of Peace and Justice—a panel of distinguished

international judges will hear testimony from witnesses, represented by legitimate lawyers, who have been harmed by Monsanto.

In their preparation for the citizens' tribunal, and during witness testimony, the judges will consider six questions that are relevant not just in relation to Monsanto, but to all companies involved in shaping the future of agriculture. The six questions are:

1. Right to a healthy environment: Did the firm Monsanto violate, by its activities, the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, as recognized in international human rights law (Res. 25/21 of the Human Rights Council, of 15 April 2014), taking into account the responsibilities imposed on corporations by the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, as endorsed by the Human Rights Council in Resolution 17/4 of 16 June 2011?
2. Right to food: Did the firm Monsanto violate, by its activities, the right to food, as recognized in Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in Articles 24.2(c) and (e) and 27.3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in Articles 25(f) and 28.1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, taking into account the responsibilities imposed on corporations by the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, as endorsed by the Human Rights Council in Resolution 17/4 of 16 June 2011?
3. Right to health: Did the firm Monsanto violate, by its activities, the right to the highest attainable standard of health, as recognized in Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, or the right of child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, as recognized by Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, taking into account the responsibilities imposed on corporations by the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, as endorsed by the Human Rights Council in Resolution 17/4 of 16 June 2011?
4. Freedom of expression and academic research: Did the firm Monsanto violate the freedom indispensable for scientific research, as guaranteed by Article 15(3) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as the freedoms of thought and expression guaranteed in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, taking into account the responsibilities imposed on corporations by the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, as endorsed by the Human Rights Council in Resolution 17/4 of 16 June 2011?
5. Complicity in war crimes: Is the firm Monsanto complicit in the commission of a war crime, as defined in Article 8(2) of the International Criminal Court, by providing materials to the United States Army in the context of operation "Ranch Hand" launched in Viet Nam in 1962?
6. Ecocide: Could the past and present activities of Monsanto constitute a crime of ecocide, understood as causing serious damage or destroying the environment, so as to significantly and durably alter the global commons or ecosystem services upon which certain human groups rely?

The citizens' tribunal judges will not have the power to adopt binding decisions. But they will issue opinions which will provide victims and their legal counsel the arguments and legal grounds for further lawsuits against Monsanto within their national jurisdictions.

Throughout history, [citizens' tribunals](#) have been an effective tool for highlighting the need to change international law so that victims of transnational companies have a means to legal redress. They are most successful when they are able to attract media attention, and are endorsed and supported by millions of citizens, throughout the world.

If you would like to endorse the International Monsanto Tribunal and follow its progress, [sign on here](#). (Organizations can also sign on, [here](#).)

To submit witness testimony, email claims (at) Monsanto-tribunal.org. You can also [support](#) the tribunal financially.

[More on the International Monsanto Tribunal.](#)

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