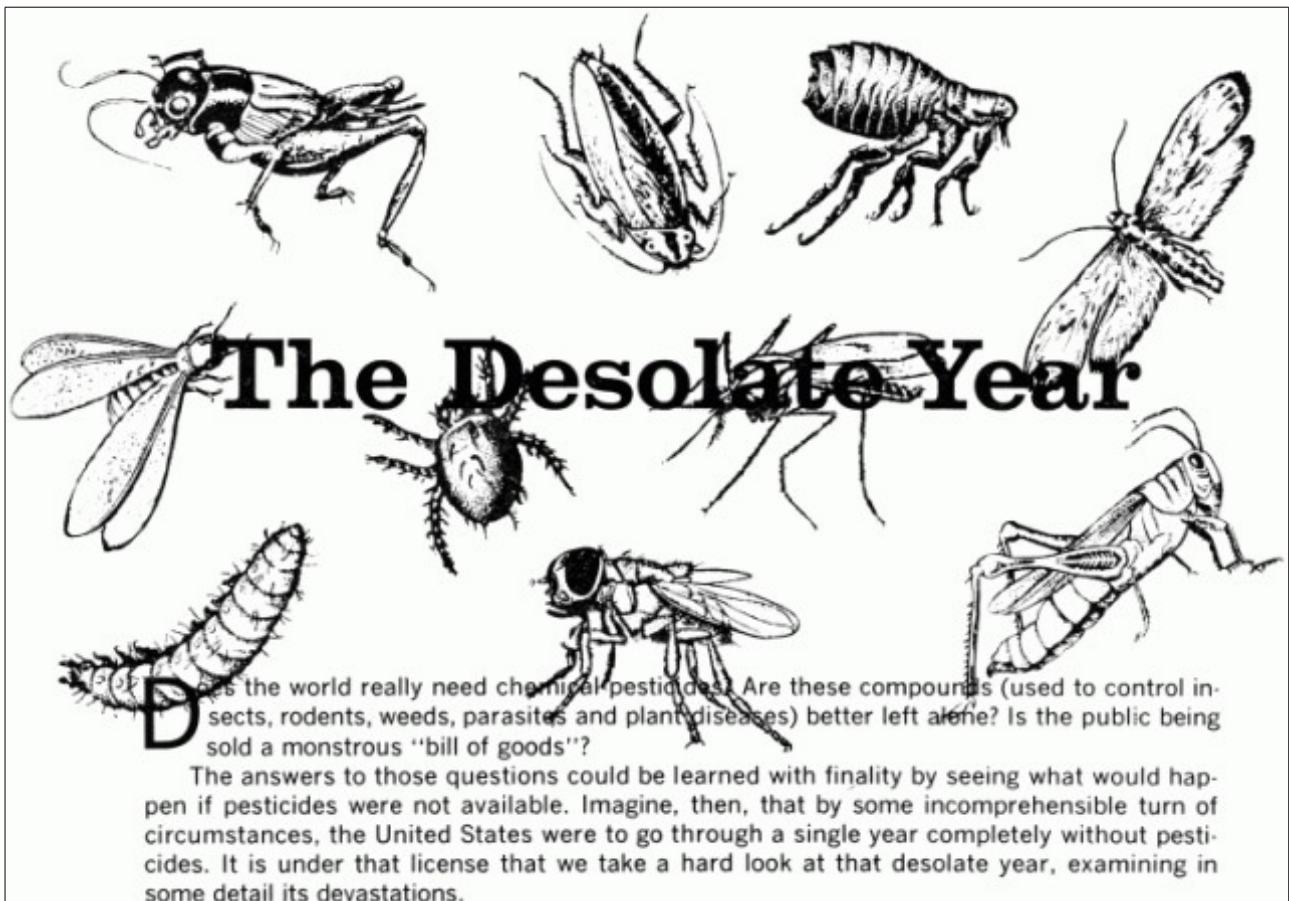




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The Desolate Year – Monsanto Magazine (1962)

Monsanto corporation's parody of Rachel Carson's "A Fable for Tomorrow," the opening section of *Silent Spring* (1962).



Monsanto. "The Desolate Year." *Monsanto Magazine*, October 1962: 4-9.

"Talk of mysteries! Think of our life in nature — daily to be shown matter, to come in contact with it — rocks, trees, wind on our cheeks! the solid earth! the actual world! the common sense! Contact! Contact! Who are we? Where are we?" —Henry David Thoreau

THE DESOLATE YEAR



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A (SHORT) HISTORY OF MONSANTO

Monsanto was founded in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1901, by John Francis Queeny, a 30-year veteran of the pharmaceutical industry. He funded the start-up with his own money and capital from a soft drink distributor, and gave the company his wife's maiden name. His father in law was Emmanuel Mendes de Monsanto, wealthy financier of a sugar company active in Vieques, Puerto Rico and based in St. Thomas in the Danish West Indies.



The company's first product was the artificial sweetener saccharin, which it sold to the **Coca-Cola Company**

It also introduced caffeine and vanillin to **Coca-Cola**, and became one of that company's main suppliers.

In 1919, Monsanto established its presence in Europe by entering into a partnership with Graesser's Chemical Works at Cefn Mawr near Ruabon, Wales to produce vanillin, salicylic acid, aspirin and

later rubber.

In its third decade, the 1920s, Monsanto expanded into basic industrial chemicals like sulphuric acid, and the decade ended with Queeny's son Edgar Monsanto Queeny taking over the company in 1928.

The 1940s saw Monsanto become a leading manufacturer of plastics, including polystyrene, and synthetic fibers. Since then, it has remained one of the top 10 US chemical companies.

Other major products have included the herbicides 2,4,5-T, DDT, and **Agent Orange** used primarily during the Vietnam War as a defoliant agent (*later found to be contaminated during manufacture with highly carcinogenic dioxin*), the artificial sweetener aspartame (**NutraSweet**), bovine somatotropin (bovine growth hormone BST), and PCBs.

Also in this decade, Monsanto operated the **Dayton Project**, and later Mound Laboratories in Miamisburg, Ohio, for the **Manhattan Project**, the development of the first nuclear weapons and, after 1947, the **Atomic Energy Commission**.

Monsanto began manufacturing **DDT** in 1944, along with some 15 other companies. This insecticide was much-welcomed in the fight against malaria-transmitting mosquitoes. The use of DDT in the U.S. was banned by Congress in 1972, due in large part to efforts by environmentalists, who persisted in the challenge put forth by Rachel Carson and her book *Silent Spring* in 1962, which sought to inform the public of the side effects associated with DDT.

As the decade ended, Monsanto acquired American Viscose from England's Courtauld family in 1949.

In 1954, Monsanto partnered with German chemical giant Bayer to form Mobay and market polyurethanes in the US.

Monsanto was a pioneer of optoelectronics in the 1970s. In 1968 they became the first company to start mass production of (visible) Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs), using gallium arsenide phosphide.

This ushered in the era of solid-state lights. From 1968 to 1970 sales doubled every few months. Their products (LEDs and seven-segment numeric displays) became the standards of industry. The primary markets then were electronic calculators, digital watches, and digital clocks.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Monsanto became one of the most important producers of **Agent Orange** for US Military operations in Vietnam. **Agent Orange** caused an immense damage to health, especially for US-soldiers, not at least by genetic modification.

In 1980, Monsanto established the Edgar Monsanto Queeny safety award, in honor of its former CEO (1928–1960), to encourage accident prevention.

Monsanto scientists became the first to genetically modify a plant cell in 1982.

Five years later, Monsanto conducted the first field tests of genetically engineered crops.

Through a process of mergers and spin-offs between 1997 and 2002, Monsanto made a transition from chemical giant to biotech giant. Part of this process involved the 1999 sale by Monsanto of their phenylalanine facilities to Great Lakes Chemical Corporation (GLC) for \$125 million.

In 2000, GLC sued Monsanto because of a \$71 million dollar shortfall in expected sales.

In 2001, retired Monsanto chemist William S. Knowles was named a co-winner of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for his research on catalytic asymmetric hydrogenation, which was carried out at Monsanto beginning in the 1960s until his 1986 retirement.

Throughout 2004 and 2005, Monsanto filed lawsuits against many farmers in Canada and the U.S. on the grounds of patent infringement, specifically the farmers' sale of seed containing Monsanto's patented genes. In some cases, farmers claimed the seed was unknowingly sown by wind carrying the seeds from neighboring crops.

These instances began in the mid to late 1990s, with one of the most significant cases being decided in Monsanto's favor by the Canadian Supreme Court. By a 5–4 vote in late May 2004, that court ruled that *“by cultivating a plant containing the patented gene and composed of the patented cells without license, the appellants (Canola farmer Percy Schmeiser) deprived the respondents of the full enjoyment of the patent.”* With this ruling, the Canadian courts followed the U.S. Supreme Court in its decision on patent issues involving plants and genes.

As of February 2005, Monsanto has patent claims on breeding techniques for pigs which would grant them ownership of any pigs born of such techniques and their related herds.

Greenpeace claims that Monsanto is trying to claim ownership on ordinary breeding techniques.

Monsanto claims that the patent is a defensive measure to track animals from its system. They furthermore claim their patented method uses a specialized insemination device that requires less sperm than is typically needed.

In 2006, the Public Patent Foundation filed requests with the United States Patent and Trademark Office to revoke four patents that Monsanto has used in patent lawsuits against farmers. In the first round of reexamination, claims in all four patents were rejected by the Patent Office in four separate rulings dating from February through July 2007.

In January 2010, Monsanto was named company of the year by Forbes.

Through a series of transactions, the Monsanto that existed from 1901 to 2000 and the current Monsanto are legally two distinct corporations. Although they share the same name and corporate headquarters, many of the same executives and other employees, and responsibility for liabilities arising out of activities in the industrial chemical business, the agricultural chemicals business is the only segment carried forward from the pre-1997 Monsanto Company to the current Monsanto Company.

This was accomplished beginning in the 1980s:

1985: Monsanto purchases G. D. Searle & Company. In this merger, Searle's aspartame business becomes a separate Monsanto subsidiary, the **NutraSweet Company**. CEO of NutraSweet, Robert B. Shapiro, goes on to become CEO of Monsanto from 1995 to 2000.

1996: Acquires 49.9% of Calgene, creators of the Flavr Savr tomato in April and another 5% in November.

1997: Monsanto spins off its industrial chemical and fiber divisions into Solutia Inc. This transfers the financial liability related to the production and contamination with PCBs at the Illinois and Alabama plants. In January, Monsanto announces the purchase of Holden's Foundations Seeds, a privately held seed business owned by the Holden family, along with its sister sales organization, Corn States Hybrid Service, of Williamsburg and Des Moines, Iowa, respectively.

The combined purchase price totals \$925 million. Also, in April, Monsanto purchases the remaining shares of Calgene.

1999: Monsanto sells off NutraSweet Co. and two other companies.

2000: Monsanto merges with Pharmacia and Upjohn, and ceases to exist. Later in the year, Pharmacia forms a new subsidiary, also named Monsanto, for the agricultural divisions, and retains the medical research divisions, which includes products such as Celebrex.

2002: Pharmacia spins off its Monsanto subsidiary into a new company, the “new Monsanto.” As part of the deal, Monsanto agrees to indemnify Pharmacia against any liabilities that might be incurred from judgments against Solutia. As a result, the new Monsanto continues to be a party to numerous lawsuits that relate to operations of the old Monsanto.

2005: Monsanto purchases Seminis, a leading global vegetable and fruit seed company, for \$1.4 billion.

2007: In June, Monsanto completes its purchase of Delta and Pine Land Company, a major cotton seed breeder, for \$1.5 billion. Monsanto exits the pig breeding business by selling Monsanto Choice Genetics to Newsham Genetics LC in November, divesting itself of “any and all swine-related patents, patent applications, and all other intellectual property.”

2008: Monsanto purchases the Dutch seed company De Ruiter Seeds for €546 million, and sells its POSILAC bovine somatotropin brand and related business to Elanco Animal Health, a division of Eli Lilly and Company in August for \$300 million plus “additional contingent consideration”.

“Monsanto has been the corporate sponsor of many attractions at Disneyland and Walt Disney World.”

Current members of the board of directors of Monsanto are: Frank V. AtLee III, the former President of American Cyanamid and former chairman of Cynamid International, John W. Bachmann, Hugh Grant, the chairman of Monsanto, Arthur H. Harper, Gwendolyn S. King, president of McDonald’s USA, Sharon R. Long, C. Steven McMillan, the former chairman and CEO of Sara Lee Corporation, William U. Parfet, George H. Poste, Robert J. Stevens, the current chairman and CEO of Lockheed Martin Corporation.

Former Monsanto employees currently hold positions in US government agencies such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Supreme Court. These include Clarence Thomas, Michael R. Taylor, Ann Veneman, Linda Fisher, Michael Friedman, William D. Ruckelshaus, and Mickey Kantor. Linda Fisher has been back and forth between positions at Monsanto and the EPA.

According to an anonymous 2001 document obtained by the Centre for Public Integrity, Monsanto has been identified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as being a “*potentially responsible party*” for 56 contaminated sites (Superfund sites) in the United States.

Monsanto has been sued, and has settled, multiple times for damaging the health of its employees or residents near its Superfund sites through pollution and poisoning.

In 2004 The Wildlife Habitat Council and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s National Environmental Performance Track presented a special certificate of recognition to Monsanto Company during WHC’s 16th Annual Symposium.

Monsanto is the largest producer of glyphosate herbicides through its popular brand, ‘**ROUNDUP**’. A report released in June 2011 linked glyphosate to birth defects in frog and chicken embryos at dilutions much lower than those used in agricultural and garden spraying.

Genetically modified organisms

Many of Monsanto’s seed products are specifically genetically modified, to make them resistant to Monsanto produced agricultural chemicals, such as “**ROUNDUP**” herbicide. In a study published in the International Journal of Biological Sciences, researchers applied a different statistical analysis on raw data obtained from Monsanto and concluded that these GM corn (maize) varieties induced a state of hepatorenal toxicity.

They suggested that the presence of the new pesticides associated with the inserted genes were responsible, although the possibility that this could be due to a mutation during the transformation process was not excluded.

Monsanto was drawn into the Genetically modified food controversies over the Pusztai affair. Dr. Arpad Pusztai’s experiments suggested that it was the process of genetic engineering, not the presence of the inserted lectin gene that altered the thickness of the gut epithelium in rats when fed genetically modified potatoes.

In other words it was the process of genetic engineering itself, not the presence of pesticides caused by the engineering which caused the damage to rats.

The publication of this study has resulted in much controversy.

Terminator seed controversy

In June 2007, Monsanto acquired Delta & Pine Land Company, a company that had patented a seed technology nicknamed Terminators. This technology, which was never known to have been used commercially, produces plants that have sterile seeds so they do not flower or grow fruit after the initial planting. This prevents the spread of those seeds into the wild, however it also requires customers to repurchase seed for every planting in which they use Terminator seed varieties. In recent years, widespread opposition from environmental organisations and farmer associations has grown, mainly out of the concerns that hypothetical seeds using this technology could increase farmers' dependency on seed suppliers.

Despite the fact that in 1999, Monsanto pledged not to commercialize Terminator technology, Delta Vice President, Harry Collins, declared at the time in a press interview in the *Agra/Industrial Biotechnology Legal Letter*, "*We've continued right on with work on the Technology Protection System (TPS or Terminator). We never really slowed down. We're on target, moving ahead to commercialise it. We never really backed off.*"

rBGH (recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone)

Monsanto sparked controversy nationwide with the introduction of Bovine somatotropin, abbreviated as rBST and commonly known as rBGH. It is a synthetic hormone that is injected into cows to increase milk production. IGF-1 is a hormone stimulated by rBGH in the cow's blood stream, which is directly responsible for the increase in milk production. IGF-1 is a natural hormone found in the milk of both humans and cows causing the quick growth of infants.

Though this IGF-1 occurs naturally in mothers' milk to be fed to their infants it produces adverse effects in non-infants, behaving as a cancer accelerator in adults and non-infants; this biologically active hormone is associated with breast cancer (correlation shown in premenopausal women), prostate cancer, lung cancer and colon cancers.

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