

## **Monsanto spotted at Climate Change Conference, given the \"Angry Mermaid Award\" as the worst corporate lobbyist**

Rich Heffern | Dec. 16, 2009

The winner of the Angry Mermaid Award 2009, announced by award-winning writer and journalist Naomi Klein at the U.N climate talks in Copenhagen today is the biotech giant Monsanto with 37 per cent of the total vote. Irish Columban Missionary Fr. Sean McDonagh sent this report on Monsanto at the U.N. Conference:

"Monsanto is everywhere, peddling their wares and lobbying for a pole position. You expect to find Monsanto at food and agricultural conferences, claiming that its genetically-engineered products will feed the world while and at the same time ridding the world of pesticides.

Their representatives attended a conference organized by the Pontifical Academy of the Sciences in Rome in May 2006, pushing the leadership of the Catholic church into giving its blessing to genetically-modified (GM) crops, and then using that endorsement to undermine local bishops' conferences in Asia, Africa and Latin American that might be opposed to GM technology.

You expect to find them at the U.N. Convention of Biodiversity (CDB) rolling out Dr. Peter Raven, president of St. Louis' Missouri Botanical Garden, to tell everyone that GM crops are great for biodiversity as he did in a seminar organized by the Pontifical Academy of the Sciences and the U.S. embassy to the holy see at the Aula Maxima of the Gregorian University, a few years ago.

You expect to see Monsanto in lobby offices in Washington and Brussels. Monsanto really understands how to use political and economic power to benefit its business, locally and globally. In the revolving-door relationship between private business and political office, you find people who worked for Monsanto have crucially important offices, often cabinet positions, under successive U.S. presidents.

President Obama might have fought his election on an anti-establishment theme, even so, Monsanto is well represented in his cabinet. Obama appointed former Monsanto executive Michael Taylor and to top food safety spot in the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Taylor has moved from industry to government agencies and back, on numerous occasions. His career fits perfectly the definition for the revolving door syndrome between government, lobbying and corporate interests.

Taylor made a name for himself rotating in and out of law firms, Monsanto, the USDA and FDA. While at the FDA he helped write the rules to allow rBGH (genetically engineered bovine growth hormones) into the American food chain. This benefited Monsanto business but was very questionable on health grounds. Neither the European Union or even Canada would allow the growth hormones to be used in their countries.

There is an interview with Michael Taylor in the television program, *The World According to Monsanto* by the veteran French investigative reporter, Marie Monique Robin. Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele in their article *'Monsanto's Harvest of Fear'*, *Vanity Fair*, (May, 2008) cover the same ground and give the details of many of these political connections which are used to promote their business in the U.S. and around the globe. Monsanto was spotted here at Copenhagen.

In a public vote organized by the environmental group Friends of the Earth International and the corporate watch-group Spinwatch, Monsanto was conferred with The Angry Mermaid Award on Dec. 15. The Angry Mermaid Award has been set up to recognize the perverse role of corporate lobbyists, and highlight those business groups and companies that have made the greatest effort to sabotage the climate talks, while promoting, often profitable, false solutions.

Monsanto was nominated for its promotion of genetically modified (GM) crops as a solution to climate change, while also as pushing its crops as suitable for biofuels. On the one hand, Monsanto is claiming its crops will feed the world, on the other hand, it is championing bio-fuels as a solution to the energy problem. The diversion of food crops into the bio-fuel stream sent the price of food skyrocketing 18 months ago. The truth is that the only thing Monsanto is interested in is its profits.

According to the citation, the expansion of GM soy in Latin America is contributing to major deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions.

Monsanto has also been lobbying for carbon credits for its RoundUp Ready crops on the basis that they do not need plowing because they can be sprayed with herbicides. While not plowing the fields leaves more carbon in the ground, environmentalists point out that the spread of soy monocultures in Latin America has caused deforestation, the destruction of local agriculture and rural communities, consequent displacement of rural populations and an increase in the use of herbicides. Monsanto has twice been fined in New York and France for claiming that Roundup is sustainable and safe. It is neither, but for the past 30 years it has been a huge money spinner for Monsanto.

'Big business must not be allowed to sabotage action against climate change by promoting their vested interests,' said vote organiser Paul de Clerk from Friends of the Earth International. 'All the nominated companies have lobbied to protect their own profits and prevent effective action to tackle climate change. Governments need to stop listening to them and choose real solutions to the climate crisis.'

Monsanto was so brazen in their approach that they came ahead of such major petro-chemical companies such as:

- ?American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity
- ?American Petroleum Institute (API)
- ?European Chemical Lobby (Cefic)
- ?International Air Transport Association (IATA)
- ?International Emissions Trading Association (IETA)
- ?Sasol
- ?Shell."

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