

A lot of people have been requesting that I start a series about the most hated companies. I'm not talking about the ones that have done some shady things here or there, I'm talking about the companies that are just generally hated. Monsanto for instance, not a good reputation. Now these can be touchy subjects and I know there's a fine line here, but I don't intend this to be me trying to convince you that you should hate Monsanto. I look at it more as me informing you why many people do hate Monsanto, I hope that makes sense. I'm doing my best to leave my opinions out of it and just make it as informational as possible. So let's see how it goes:

Monsanto dates back to 1901, it was started in St. Louis by this man name John Francisco Queeny. Monsanto was his wife's maiden name, and he decided to name the company that. Unclear exactly why, but that's what he did. The original intention for the business was to produce this artificial sweetener named saccharin. There's since been a lot about saccharin, involving health concerns but in 1901 no one had any issues. He started selling it to the Coca Cola company, after a few years started selling caffeine and vanilla and by 1928 John Queeny had left his son a multi-million dollar chemical company. That's what they've been for a big part of their existence. In the 1940s they started getting involved in agriculture and then biotechnology. That became an increasing part of their business leading up to the 1996 spinoff of their chemical unit. In the year 2000 they did this thing where they merged with another company, then spun off their agricultural operations into a new separate company and called that Monsanto. Then in 2018 that company was bought by Bayer for \$63 billion. They said they'd be getting rid of the Monsanto name. It's been a lot of changes and through all of it there's been a lot of hatred, so let's look at where it comes from.

Atomic Bomb

During World War II, in the early 1940s, there was this secret effort lead by the United States to create an atomic bomb. It was called the Manhattan project and as part of it they needed a bunch of this radioactive metal called polonium-210, but they didn't know how to separate it so they couldn't obtain the amount they needed. So the Army contacts Monsanto for help with the issue. Turns out Monsanto had just bought these laboratories in Dayton Ohio 10 years ago and were using them for main research department so they accepted the challenge and started working on it over there. The whole thing was a success, the bomb was created, and 2 of them were dropped on Japan. Plenty of arguments have been made concerning whether this was good or bad. The fact is Monsanto did play a part in creating that bomb along with many others, I should make that clear, but you could see how their involvement could cause some hatred directed toward them.

Agent Orange

This stuff was developed in the 1930's as an herbicide, it was used by farmers to kill weeds and plants, that sort of thing. Then in the 1960's, as part of the Vietnam war, the U.S. government had this idea of spraying it all over Vietnam in an attempt to kill their food supply. It was called Operation Ranch Hand and is very controversial. Over a 9 year span the U.S. Air Force sprayed almost 20 million gallons of herbicides over Vietnam and over half of that was specifically agent orange. So that's the big one here and one of the major suppliers of it to the U.S. government was Monsanto. Well it turns out, it doesn't just kill plants, it's terribly harmful to the humans that are exposed to it. As effect of their exposure, when the U.S. Vietnam war veterans returned home they were developing different types of cancers, other diseases, their children had birth defects. It was bad, estimates say it's negatively effected millions of people in the U.S., not to mention the people of Vietnam. Agent orange is a wide topic that we could

talk about for a long time, but back to Monsanto. They were involved in this lawsuit starting in 1979 where U.S. Vietnam War veterans collectively sued the chemical companies who made it and Monsanto was one of the major ones. In 1984 it ended with a \$180 million out of court settlement, they admitted no liability, and looking back it was kind of a win for Monsanto. Their stock price actually went up because a lot of people were expecting the outcome to be much worse. Their big defense in the whole thing was that “the government set the specifications for making Agent Orange and determined when, where and how it was used.” Sort of pushing responsibility onto the government, which, they’re all involved. There’s been notes and other evidence found suggesting that Monsanto knew how harmful it was, I’m sure the government knew as well. It’s really just a terrible thing. Related to that, as recent as 2012, they settled a lawsuit from the residents of Nitro, West Virginia. From 1949-1971 Monsanto had a plant there that produced some harmful ingredients used to make Agent Orange. The people who lived there claimed that they were exposed to ridiculously high levels of these harmful chemicals. For the settlement they didn’t admit they did anything wrong but they agreed to pay millions of dollars in medical testing and professional house cleaning. Their responsibility in everything involving Agent Orange will continue to be debated but the fact is they were a major producer of something that harmed or killed millions of innocent people, and we can see how that would spark some hatred.

Aspartame

That’s another chemical with debate on whether or not it causes cancer or other health problems. It’s an artificial sweetener, NutraSweet or Equal. Well in 1985 Monsanto spent \$2.7 billion to buy the company that made Nutrasweet. Another example of them selling a chemical that’s potentially harmful.

PCBs

This can also go deep. PCB stands for polychlorinated biphenyls, I don’t know, but they used be used all over the place. They were in refrigerators, paints, plastics, electrical equipment but then we learned that it’s dangerous. It likely causes cancer, it’s bad news if you’re around it when you’re pregnant, and in general it’s just not something that should be everywhere. For these reasons, in 1979, it was banned by the EPA. They said you couldn’t produce it anymore and they had a plan to gradually phase it where it was already being used. Monsanto was the main producer of this stuff in North America. Again, they produced something that harmed a bunch of people and again the question is whether or not they realized how harmful it was. And again there have been plenty of documents found suggesting that they did. They knew it was harmful but failed to inform anyone and continued to sell it, some of the documents go back to the 1930s. And how about this, in 2003 they agreed to a \$700 million settlement in connection with charges that accused them of dumping waste containing PCBs all around this town in Alabama, called Anniston. And it went on for years, it was in the air, in the water, and the residents had poor health effects because of it. That just a brief overview of their connection to PCBs, there’s much more that could be said. It’s generally believed that they’ve been pretty irresponsible with them and knowingly did shady things that harmed the health of innocent people.

Round-Up

In 1976 they introduced this product call RoundUp and it was pretty awesome. It kills weeds and unwanted plants, it was used by farmers, everyday homeowners, you may have used it. It does a good job. Then 1996 they were able to genetically modify these plants to where they were basically immune to RoundUp. They called them Roundup Ready Crops meaning you could spray it all over everything and

only the unwanted plants and weeds will be harmed. There's concern over those as well along with other genetically modified organisms that they provide. They sell all these seeds that are genetically modified in different ways there's been so many arguments against them and for them. I don't want this to turn into the pros and cons of GMOs but there's a lot of people against them and if you're against GMOs, you've probably been against Monsanto. But back to Roundup, in 2018, there was increased concern over it. Turns out there's an ingredient in it that likely causes cancer. People dislike how they fail properly label that, how they tried to minimize it, there's been all these successful lawsuits from people who were diagnosed with cancer after using it a lot. Plenty of Roundup related outrage.

rBGH

That stands for recombinant bovine growth hormone, it's a hormone you give to cows and they produce more milk. A lot of controversy surrounding this one. It was approved in 1993 by the FDA but not allowed in Canada or Europe. In 1994 Monsanto quickly became a major producer of it, I don't want to spend too much time here but backlash against it is that cows treated with it have increased rates of udder infections and other health issues, plus the milk that comes from these cows have elevated levels of this other hormone that looks like it could lead to various types of cancer. It's one of those things you have to learn about yourself and form your own opinions but many people disapprove of it and since Monsanto was one of the first and biggest companies to provide rBGH, you can see how that would cause some hatred.

Just to summarize. They were involved in making the atomic bomb, they supplied the government with tons of Agent Orange that ended up harming millions of innocent people, they became major supplier of the controversial chemical Aspartame, they sold PCBs for years that they probably knew were harmful and were seemingly irresponsible in disposing waste containing it, they sold Roundup weed killer without sufficiently warning us that it can be harmful, not to mention the Roundup Ready crops and all the highly debated GMOs, which leads me to rBGH for cows which again may be harmful for cows and humans. I think we can see the pattern here. Over the years they've sold a lot of harmful stuff. Some of it debated, some of it pretty conclusive. Sometimes they knew what they were doing, sometimes they didn't. It's all been negative, it's the nature of the video but there's some good too. I mean Monsanto has been a major chemical company and a major agricultural company that's provided some important products. There's a lot of people in favor in half the stuff I mentioned throughout the video.

Let me know in the comments, did I cover it pretty well? I fear I may have glossed over the GMOs and what that means for the farmer, the labeling, everything going on there, that's probably the biggest reason they're hated today. But there was a lot to cover and a lot of stuff I didn't even get. DDT for example, the concept of terminator seeds, Styrofoam (or their equivariant it), so before you form opinions about Monsanto I recommend you look more into some of this stuff. Finally, what do you think of the new series, a little different from what I normally do so I'd appreciate the feedback. And what other hated companies would you like to see covered? I'd like to hear what you have to say. Thank you for watching.

1976 – Introduced

1996 – Were able to genetically modify plants and introduced “Roundup Ready” crops that could survive RoundUp while killing the weeds around it.

2000 – Glyphosate patent expired in 2000

2018 – Well, there’s an ingredient in it that likely causes cancer.

2018 - \$289 million in damages awarded to someone who got cancer

2019 -

California jury ordered them to pay \$290 million to a groundskeeper diagnosed with cancer after he repeatedly used Roundup.

Saccharin

1901 – Started producing it.

It was an artificial sweetener that they would sell to Coca-Cola.

Aspartame

1985 – Purchase G.D. Searle despite FDA investigation into their chief product, aspartame.

GMOs

1994 – Introduces recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH) in efforts to increase milk production.

2012 – California’s proposition 37 would have required labeling of foods with genetically engineered ingredients. Failed partially due to \$8.1 million in Monsanto donations.

Genetically modified seeds.

DDT

It’s an insecticide, you use it to kill bugs.

Produced it from 1944-1957

Banned by the United States in 1972.

Another chemical that’s not safe.

Styrofoam – Polystyrene

Terminator Seed