

DuPont hires ex-police to patrol soybean farms

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Seed and chemical giant DuPont just hired a fleet of [ex-police officers](#) to patrol the farmlands of North America.

The second-largest seed company used to rely on their partner/competitor Monsanto to play the industry 'bad cop' when it came to seed policing. But now DuPont executives have made it clear that they are not afraid to make some enemies as they protect the company's intellectual property interests in genetically engineered seeds. And they've hired an "agro-protection" company staffed by former police officers to do it.

Seed saving no more

The practice of seed saving has been used by generations of farmers to save on financial inputs. But once the [Big 6](#) started genetically modifying and patenting traits in their seeds, farmers have been legally forbidden from replanting or reselling certain varieties of the most popular seeds.

One of those restricted varieties, RoundUp Ready soybeans, is produced as a highly profitable collaboration between Monsanto and DuPont. Monsanto long ago started monitoring, investigating and [suing farmers](#) if they were suspected of replanting seeds.

A big shift in the industry is coming with the patent expiration of the primary trait in soybean seeds — their resistance to RoundUp. Monsanto's approach will be to quickly introduce a new generation of patented RoundUp Ready seeds to the market.

A new cop in town

DuPont, however, [has made it clear](#) that the other patented traits in the RoundUp Ready soybean allow the company to continue enforcing its 'no seed-saving' policy. DuPont has contracted Saskatoon, a Saskatchewan-based "agro-protection" company to monitor farmer soybean operations. The private inspectors will examine planting and purchasing records at farms and take plant cuttings, looking to expose unlicensed use of RoundUp Ready seeds.

Charles Benbrook of Washington State University's Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources puts it this way:

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Farmers are never going to get cheap access to these genetically engineered varieties. The biotech industry has trumped the legitimate economic interests of the farmer again by raising the ante on intellectual property.

So far, the company has 45 agents on the ground in Canada, and is planning to add 35 in the U.S. next year.

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