



Celebrating Wins, Making Change Happen!

We have real, on-the-ground progress to celebrate at all levels this fall—from state policy wins to national impact to pesticide bans on the international stage. Each and every one of these milestones reflects the hard work of our coalition partners, and strong engagement from PAN supporters across the country.

Buffer zones for California schoolchildren

In early November, PAN and our partners in the Californians for Pesticide Reform coalition won new rules protecting schoolchildren from agricultural pesticides. The first of their kind in the country, the rules restrict pesticide applications within ¼-mile of schools and day-care centers. A 2014 report from the state's Department of Public Health found that more than half a million California schoolchildren are potentially exposed to regular pesticide applications, with Latinx children the most likely to be affected. While our coalition will continue pressing for even stronger protections, winning these new rules is an important first step to protecting children's health.

Clovis steps down

Sam Clovis, the controversial nominee for the top scientist post at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, withdrew his hat from the ring in early November. Thousands of PAN supporters were part of the widespread public opposition to the appointment, pressure which helped delay confirmation hearings by several months. Clovis came under increasing scrutiny for his inflammatory statements and complete lack of science credentials. On top of being clearly unqualified for the position, news came to light

that Clovis may also have contributed to Russia's interference in last year's presidential election. As noted by PAN Senior Scientist Marcia Ishii-Eitman, "Sam Clovis withdrawing is a welcome sign for those of us who value science and the well-being of farming communities."

International pesticide bans

Thailand recently announced a ban on paraquat and glyphosate, two of the most widely used herbicides in the world. Paraquat has long been a pesticide of high concern for PAN as it is severely toxic (ingesting even one teaspoon can be lethal) and has been linked to cancer and Parkinson's disease. Glyphosate, the active ingredient in Monsanto's flagship herbicide RoundUp, has been designated a "probable" carcinogen by the World Health Organization's cancer research agency. PAN is working to curb agricultural reliance on glyphosate, especially in Europe, where the pesticide is up for review by the European Parliament. In other positive news, a scientific committee recently moved the pesticide dicofol toward a global ban under the Stockholm Convention. Dicofol is a pesticide related to DDT that has been linked to cancer and endocrine disruption.

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Dicamba Drift? This is on you, Monsanto

by Dr. Marcia Ishii-Eiteman, Senior Scientist

The epidemic of dicamba drift blowing across 25 states this summer damaged more than *three million* acres of soybean cropland. Beyond the list of some 2,700 reported dicamba-related crop injuries are likely many unreported acres of damaged fruit and vegetable farms, vineyards, trees, home gardens, hedgerows and plant habitats critical to pollinators and other wildlife.

Monsanto—maker of the dicamba herbicide at fault, and the genetically engineered (GE) crops implicated in the crisis—has been quick to blame farmers. But farmers are clear that the pesticide and biotech seed giant is responsible for this mess.

Chemical arms race to the bottom

For decades, Monsanto has enjoyed unrivaled dominance in the biotech and pesticide marketplace. However, in recent years, the company's control of agricultural seeds and pesticides—built largely on the marketing of its genetically engineered RoundUp Ready seeds designed for use with the herbicide RoundUp—has begun to crack.

For years, farmers have been struggling with the emergence and spread of RoundUp-resistant “superweeds” now infesting over 90 million acres of farmland. And RoundUp—or rather, its active ingredient glyphosate—has been found in nearly all stream and air samples tested in the Midwest. Additionally, the World Health Organization has concluded that glyphosate is a “probable” carcinogen.

Rather than clean up its act, Monsanto has redoubled its efforts to follow the same recipe for disaster, racing against

rivals like Dow AgroScience to introduce new lines of transgenic seeds engineered to resist (and increase the use of) even more chemical herbicides—like dicamba.

“It’ll be fine”

Dicamba is a notoriously drift-prone herbicide. And it takes a ridiculously small amount of it to severely damage a vulnerable crop (or other broadleaf plants). That’s why PAN, farmers and farm businesses have been warning USDA for years that if the agency approved Monsanto’s dicamba-resistant seeds, the accompanying surge in use of this herbicide would lead to a drift crisis that endangers farmer livelihoods across the country.

That’s exactly what we’re seeing now.

Monsanto, meanwhile, has been quick to blame farmers and pesticide applicators for “improper use”—or for applying the older, even more drift-prone formulations of dicamba. But who began pushing farmers to buy the dicamba-resistant seeds in the first place, before Monsanto’s supposedly less volatile dicamba was approved for sale? And whose sales representatives

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The Science

for your conversations about pesticides

Dicamba: First registered in the U.S. in 1967, dicamba is toxic to most broadleaf plants (i.e. plants that are not grasses). This includes fruits, nuts and vegetables, non-GE soy and cotton, trees and field-edge plants that provide critical habitat for pollinators and other beneficial species.

Dicamba is a volatile herbicide, which means that after its application as a liquid, it can subsequently vaporize and drift to neighboring fields and beyond. Volatilization occurs more readily at higher summertime temperatures, which is why the extended use of dicamba on GE crops has been so problematic.

As a result of widespread planting of Monsanto’s dicamba-resistant crops—and the corresponding surge in dicamba use throughout the 2017 growing season—over 3.5 million acres of soybeans across 25 states have been damaged by the herbicide’s drift. Other plants and crops (tomatoes, watermelon, cantaloupe, vineyards, pumpkins, organic vegetables, residential gardens, trees and shrubs) have been harmed as well.



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To address the dicamba drift crisis and protect its farmers, Arkansas—a major soybean producing state—has proposed a ban on dicamba applications from April through October of next year. In response, Monsanto is suing Arkansas. EPA has yet to take meaningful action to address the issue.

Voices from the Frontline Claudia Angulo

Claudia Angulo is a mother from Orange Cove, California, whose kids attend schools near heavy pesticide use on citrus trees. In collaboration with the local nonprofit El Quinto Sol de América, a journalist helped Claudia conduct a biomonitoring study of her son—and they found over 50 different pesticides in his body.

Claudia has since become a leader and activist within her community for pesticide reform, and the migrant education program recently nominated her for “Parent of the Year.” We had the opportunity to speak with Claudia about her experiences.



Photo courtesy of Claudia Angulo

PAN: How does industrial agriculture affect your life and your community as a whole?

Claudia Angulo: I first noticed the effects of pesticides with the birth of my second child. He was born with different health complications but, most notably, the doctors detected something wrong with his cognitive development. I later came to find out that studies in recent years linked pesticides to some of the illnesses my child had.

When I first moved to the Central Valley [three years ago], my children started having acute reactions every time we smelled pesticides in the air. For example, my smallest child would get rashes and other skin reactions that are exacerbated during the spray season. She also gets major nasal congestion and bloody noses.

PAN: What has been your response?

Claudia: After learning about the dangers of pesticides, I began going to my children’s school to suggest that they not be taken out to the playground if I could perceive a smell. I became more active. I became an advocate. I now share the information I know with other mothers. I reach out to other organizations that are involved with this. I fight for pesticide reform.

This is an excerpt from our “Voices from the Frontline” blog series that tells the stories of how pesticides and industrial agriculture directly affect the lives of people across the country. Claudia was actively involved in the organizing that led to the statewide buffer zone win described on the front page. To read the full conversation with Claudia—translated into English by Angel Garcia, a community organizer with Californians for Pesticide Reform—visit www.panna.org/blog/voices-frontline-claudia-angulo.

PAN: What effects of pesticide exposure do you see in your larger community?

Claudia: During spray season, children are most vulnerable. At school, headaches and bloody noses are common but go unreported. I’ve even seen some children pass out. I’m a parent volunteer at the school, and I’ve seen how the number of kids going in to see a nurse increases during spray season.

PAN: What resources do you wish you had access to in order to combat this problem?

Claudia: Schools need to know what pesticides are applied nearby. It would also be beneficial to have growers use alternatives that are less dangerous. This change would benefit growers too because their product would be better and more profitable. Growers should look at this as an investment—quality of life would improve.

PAN: What is your ideal vision of a just, healthy food system?

Claudia: Ultimately, I would like for schools and daycare centers to be free of pesticides. We need the children to be safe. This is what a healthy food system would look like.... We all win in a pesticide-free food system.

ABOUT PAN PAN works to create a just, thriving food system, working with those on the frontlines to tackle the pesticide problem—and reclaim the future of food and farming. One of five regional centers worldwide, PAN North America links local and international consumer, labor, health, environment and agriculture groups into an international citizens’ action network. Together, we challenge the global proliferation of pesticides, defend basic rights to health and environmental quality, and work to ensure the transition to a just and viable food system.

Sustain PAN’s Work—Give Monthly

When you join PAN as a Sustainer, you become part of a vital group that donates each month to fund grassroots science, collaboration with frontline communities and policy change.

We rely on consistent support from Sustainers to work towards a healthy, fair and resilient system of food and farming.

Become a Sustainer today by going to www.panna.org/give-monthly.



Farmer Equity Act becomes law

In October, Governor Jerry Brown signed legislation requiring California officials to address long-standing inequities for farmers of color by making access to state and federal resources more equitable. This comes at a critical moment as the current generation of farmers is retiring and new farmers are increasingly represented by people of color, including immigrants

and refugees. “While historic discrimination won’t be solved overnight, the Farmer Equity Act opens the door, requiring that state officials identify and address the ways farmers of color, including black farmers, have largely been ignored,” said Dr. Gail Myers, PhD, co-founder of Oakland-based Farms to Grow and a leading member of the California Farmer Justice Collaborative, which PAN co-founded last year. —



California Farmer Justice Collaborative members celebrate the Farmer Equity Act

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actually encouraged farmers to go ahead and apply the old products illegally, knowing the herbicide would drift, while telling them “it’ll be fine”?

That’s right. Monsanto. The result? Anything but fine.

Profit over reason

Turns out, it’s not only the old dicamba that is volatile. University researchers have found that Monsanto’s much-hyped new dicamba product—the one that farmers have been spraying this season—is also prone to drift. So why did EPA ever approve such a product?

Quite simply, industry greed won out. EPA only looked at Monsanto’s volatility studies, which conveniently concluded, “it’ll be fine.” EPA did not look at independent researchers’ studies. Why? Because they hadn’t been done. And that’s because Monsanto actually prohibited researchers from testing its claims about the supposed reduced volatility of its product before it had secured EPA approval.

Monsanto justified its refusals to allow independent study of its product, arguing that such investigations could slow down EPA’s approval process. (EPA, for its part, did not seem to mind the lack of thorough research.)

Farmers want off the pesticide treadmill

In September, 85 farms and farmer support organizations sent letters to USDA and EPA, demanding that these agencies take immediate action to rescind their approval of Monsanto’s dicamba-resistant seeds and dicamba products. Neither agency has yet responded.

Missouri farmer, Wes Shoemyer, nailed it when he told us,

“Monsanto does not listen to voices in the field or allow public testing of its products. This is what happens when your seed company is also the chemical company.”

Take action:

Tell EPA to do its job and stop the wave of dicamba damage at www.panna.org/stop-dicamba

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