

Pesticide Makers in Paradise PAN Fights to Protect Kids in Hawai'i

Five of the world's six largest GE seed and pesticide corporations—BASF, Dow, DuPont, Monsanto and Syngenta—are using prime farmland on the Hawai'ian islands to test new GE crops. Their experimental plots are displacing smaller farmers and driving up the use of health-harming pesticides.

But, with your support, PAN is working with local mothers, farmers and doctors to shine a light on the increasing pesticide exposure and corporate influence in Hawai'i.

Kaua'i, in particular, has become an epicenter of this struggle. With local communities, we've documented the widespread use of hazardous pesticides in the island of Kaua'i's GE test fields. And the science is clear: these practices are harmful, and there are healthier, successful farming solutions. The battle for the future of the island—and the health legacy for its children—is heating up.

Widespread use of pesticides that harm children

In the last year alone, pesticide corporations on Kaua'i used more than 18 tons of restricted use pesticides. They are some of the most hazardous chemicals and the only pesticides that Hawai'i officials track. And that's not the only disturbing fact.

As part of a legal agreement with officials on the west side of the island, DuPont was forced to disclose that pesticides are sprayed on those fields an average of 240 days of the year. The company sprays organophosphates like chlorpyrifos every three days. As we described in last year's *A Generation in Jeopardy*, neurotoxins like chlorpyrifos are increasingly linked to learning disabilities, falling IQs and hormone disruption.

Local governments step up

Federal and state laws have failed to protect Hawai'ian children from these pesticides. This summer, PAN filed another lawsuit to force EPA to fulfill its mandate to protect children from difficult-to-control pesticides, but the agency seems unable or unwilling to do so.

Local governments like Kaua'i County recognize they have the right and responsibility to protect their communities. Decades ago, the pesticide industry pushed through preemption laws in over 40 states to limit the



Photo: Fern Holland

Kaua'i-born Tiana Laranio, a volunteer with 'Ohana 'O Kaua'i, is campaigning for Bill 2491 to increase disclosure about pesticide use, protect kids with no-spray zones and investigate impacts of GE test fields on the island. PAN is helping 'Ohana 'O Kaua'i, Hawai'i SEED and other partners stand up to the Big 6 in Hawai'i.

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Safer Fields, Safer Families

After more than a decade of promises and delays, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is finally poised to strengthen the rules protecting farmworkers.

Nearly two million farmworkers are on the frontlines of our food production system, performing some of the most physically demanding and dangerous labor in any sector. Yet they are among the least protected from harms on the job.

PAN has been working for more than 13 years with farmworker groups across the country—including Farmworker Association of Florida, California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation and Farmworker Justice—urging EPA to revise and improve enforcement of the federal Worker Protection Standard for Agricultural Pesticides.

Farmworkers are regularly exposed to pesticides, most often from drift from nearby applications sites and residues in

the fields—when they are planting, weeding or harvesting crops—as well as from mixing and applying pesticides themselves. Many live in or near treated fields, where pesticides often drift into their homes, exposing entire families. Health threats include acute pesticide poisoning and long-term effects like cancer, birth defects and learning disabilities.

Occupational safety laws that protect almost every other worker in the U.S. do not apply to farmworkers. The rules that were put in place to fill this gap—the Worker Protection Standard—are weak and too often unenforced. An estimated 10,000–20,000 farmworkers are still poisoned by pesticides every year.

In July, PAN helped bring over a dozen farmworkers to Capitol Hill to meet face-to-face with legislators and remind them what's at stake when hard-working men, women and children are exposed to hazardous pesticides on a daily basis.

A safer and fair food system would benefit us all, protecting the health and livelihoods of farmworkers, farmers, rural communities and consumers. Shifting away from highly hazardous pesticides is a long-term solution. But as long as these pesticides remain in use, farmworkers need better protections from these chemicals in the field—and they should not have to wait any longer.

Join us in urging EPA to strengthen workplace protections for farmworkers: www.panna.org/wps



Most farmworkers' pesticide exposure occurs as a result of pesticide drift from nearby application sites and pesticide residues in the fields.

Drying alfalfa photo ©Ken Light/Valleyofshadowsanddreams.com.

ON THE WEB To learn more about photographer and PAN supporter Ken Light, visit www.panna.org/pan-conversation-light.

The Science

*for your conversations
about pesticides*

Under current rules, farmworkers are not adequately protected from pesticide exposure.

- They experience 39 times the incidence of acute pesticide poisonings compared to workers in all other industries combined.
- Most poisonings occur as a result of exposure to pesticides that drift from application sites and to pesticide residues in the fields.

This exposure would be directly addressed if EPA enacted a stronger Worker Protection Standard.

Building a New Life

Six years ago, when Brooklyn photographer Melanie took a break to visit a friend in Vermont, becoming a farmer was not in her plan. “We went to the local farmers market and she insisted I try these amazing cheeseburgers.” Her friend introduced her to Tyler Webb, who’d raised the grass-fed beef cattle. “The next day we got together for hot chocolate and a walk around the lake.”

Melanie had studied business and photography in college; neither she nor Tyler had grown up on a farm. Tyler sent her *Vermont Farm Women*, a book of gritty, honest portraits. They dated, and within a year she moved to join him in Fairfield, Vermont, just north of Burlington. Two years later they married.

The Webb’s Stony Pond Farm is grass-based and intensively grazed: cattle roam 140 acres, 60 acres are in hay, with forest on another 60. They are members of Organic Valley Cooperative, where they send milk from 46 Jersey cows. They sell meat from a herd of 20 grass-fed and finished British Whites and organic, milk-fed, pasture-raised veal at the Burlington farmers market and to local restaurants.

Their successful operation is a study in agroecology. Melanie explains:

Cows grazing fresh grass over a 40-day pasture rotation ensures that our land is in constant vigorous vegetative growth. No herbicides, pesticides or chemical fertilizers are used. Our mineral cycle is rapid, as nutrients move through soils, plants, animals, manures, compost, soil microbes and the products we sell. Our water cycle is slow, as rain and snow melt percolate slowly through deep, well-structured, high-organic-matter soils. Solar energy flow through plants is available to livestock and wildlife and harvested by us as solar dollars. Our cows are at their best, freely choosing their diet from a diverse array of grasses, forbs and browse alike.

At two years of age, son Wyatt enjoys riding the tractor with Tyler. Two-month-old daughter Willow sleeps in Melanie’s



Photo courtesy of Organic Valley Cooperative

“One can only be so lucky as to share in the bliss felt by that of a ruminating cow lying in the shade,” says Melanie Webb. As members of Organic Valley Cooperative, she and Tyler are allies of Pesticide Action Network. The Co-op helps fund our work to protect children’s health.

backpack while she works around the farm. “Tyler and I never fed our children commercial baby food—we pureed versions of what we ate, a balanced diet with lots of whole foods. Studies show children are more impacted by the harms of pesticides than adults. It’s so important for children to eat organic. Wyatt helps me harvest our garden, eating as we go. It’s made him enjoy vegetables and understand how they get to his plate.”

Leaving her city life to become a new farmer has been challenging at times, but Melanie finds it most rewarding. “Neither of us wants to do anything else.”

ON THE WEB For the complete interview with Melanie Webb, visit www.panna.org/pan-conversation-webb.

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— OUR MISSION —

30 YEARS **Pesticide Action Network North America** **90 COUNTRIES**
works to replace the use of hazardous pesticides with ecologically sound and socially just alternatives. As one of five PAN Regional Centers worldwide, we link local and international consumer, labor, health, environment and agriculture groups into an international citizens’ action network. This network challenges the global proliferation of pesticides, defends basic rights to health and environmental quality, and works to ensure the transition to a just and viable society.

power of local governments to regulate pesticides. But Hawai'i has a history of honoring local rights and remains one of the few states that allows more health-protective laws.

Kaua'i is on the verge of passing a law that would create greater disclosure about pesticide use on the island and greater protections for kids—including no-spray zones—and a comprehensive environmental and health review of the impacts of GE test fields on the island.

Industry pushes back

Fearful that the Kaua'i law will pass and the public will learn more about their experiments, GE and pesticide corporations are running intensive television, print and radio advertisements, and telemarketers are calling every household on the island,

spreading misinformation. The companies are even paying all their employees to pack public hearings.

PAN is helping Hawai'i SEED, 'Ohana 'O Kaua'i and other local partners to stand up to the Big 6, cut through the misinformation and promote a healthy future for Kaua'i.

What you can do

- Learn more about the efforts in Kaua'i, including ways to support at www.StopPoisoningParadise.org.
- Help protect children from exposure to harmful pesticides. Learn more at www.panna.org/kids.
- Donate now to help PAN stand up to pesticide corporations at www.panna.org/donate.

Pesticide corporations are using Kaua'i as testing grounds for genetically engineered crops and pesticides. We have a right to know what's being grown on the island and what harmful chemicals are being used in the process. And when pesticides are sprayed, we need protections in place for children.

— Kaua'i mother Lorilani Keohokalole-Torio

What's in Your Lunchbox?

As kids head back to school, parents are doing what they can to send them out the door ready to learn. Here's an important item for the checklist: pack lunches free of pesticides that may hamper the functioning of a child's brain.

Choosing fruits and veggies is always a healthy start. Yet in study after study, scientists report that pesticides commonly found on produce may harm a child's ability to learn. What to do?

PAN's What's on My Food website (www.whatsonmyfood.org) and iPhone app are great tools that detail pesticides found on common



What's on my food?

foods—and the health effects these chemicals can cause. Blueberries? Grapes? Carrots? Find out which has the fewest pesticide residues, and which pesticides can harm developing minds.

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