

Millions Against Monsanto

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Summary

The article highlights the number of lawsuits filed and the Millions Against Monsanto Campaign, which was started by the Organic Consumers Association (OCA) in the mid-1990s to protest against the hazard induced by Monsanto's products like the Roundup herbicide, which contains glyphosate and is doubted to be carcinogenic.

Alva and Alberta Pilliod, an elderly couple in their late 70s living in California were both diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, Alva in 2011 and Alberta in 2015. The couple has been using the Roundup herbicide for decades and learned about the disease in 2015. The glyphosate chemical present in the herbicide, Roundup, sold by the company Monsanto, was alleged to be carcinogenic by the lawyers of the couple.¹

The jury in Oakland, California ruled in favor of the couple, who filed a lawsuit, determining Monsanto as liable for the damages caused to the health of the couple using their products, including Roundup. A total of 2.055 USD billion is the sum the jury decided to award the couple as the verdict of their lawsuit against Monsanto.

A debate regarding the scientific accuracy was also part of the lawsuit that went into the research behind glyphosate and its carcinogenic risk. Another allegation raised against Monsanto is their lack of accountability in informing their consumers of the potential health risks in using their products. The Millions Against Monsanto Campaign, which was started by the Organic Consumers Association (OCA) in the mid-1990s to protest against the hazard induced by their products, gained prominence during the trial.⁵

Similar lawsuits were filed against the company in the past as well. One such case led to a verdict pronounced by a 6-member jury in the Alameda County, requiring Roundup to pay the plaintiff, diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma, to the tune of 80 million USD. Another case was when a groundskeeper of a school diagnosed with cancer, found to be due to the use of Roundup and a state court in San Francisco awarded

a figure of 289 million USD, to be paid by Monsanto to the groundskeeper.³

Now the question that arises is, why isn't Bayer disowning their purchase of Monsanto in 2016 for a whopping 66 billion USD? Glyphosate is the answer to all these queries. It is the carcinogenic found in the herbicide, used primarily for killing the weed, and Monsanto holds the patent for the chemical since the 1970s. Although the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) along with the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in unison declared glyphosate as non-carcinogenic, the WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) suggested against it, that is, *glyphosate was found to be carcinogenic*.²

It was in the midst of this storm that a jury awarded the Pilliod couple 1 billion USD each in punitive damages and another 55 million USD in collective compensatory damages. Deliberating for four weeks hearing testimonies of doctors, health researchers, and epidemiologist, the jury's verdict came as a reverberating statement for conglomerates to *put the consumers' safety above profits*.⁴ Monsanto is sure to appeal this verdict and may receive a reduced sentence after their appeal. However, this is a significant step in educating the public on the health hazard posed by herbicides and chemicals sold under the guise of scientific breakthrough, against the greed of the corporates.

Endnotes:

¹ Cohen, P. (2019, May 13). \$2 Billion Verdict Against Monsanto Is Third to Find Roundup Caused Cancer, see <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/13/business/monsanto-roundup-cancer-verdict.html>

² In Largest Verdict Yet, Jury Orders Monsanto-Bayer to Pay \$2 Billion in Roundup Damages. (2019, May 15), see <https://modernfarmer.com/2019/05/in-largest->

[verdict-yet-jury-orders-monsanto-bayer-to-pay-2-billion-in-roundup-damages/](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/13/business/monsanto-roundup-cancer-verdict.html)

³ Bellon, T. (2018, August 11). Monsanto ordered to pay \$289 million in world's first Roundup, see <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-monsanto-cancer-lawsuit/monsanto-ordered-to-pay-289-million-in-worlds-first-roundup-cancer-trial-idUSKBN1KV2HB>

⁴ Gonzales, R. (2019, May 14). California Jury Awards \$2 Billion To Couple In Roundup Weed Killer Cancer Trial, see <https://www.npr.org/2019/05/13/723056453/california-jury-awards-2-billion-to-couple-in-roundup-weed-killer-cancer-trial>

⁵ Millions Against Monsanto. (n.d.), see <https://www.organicconsumers.org/campaigns/millions-against-monsanto>