

THE POWER OF A MULTINATIONAL

Monsanto & GM Foods



ONLINE SUPPORT MATERIAL

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THE POWER OF A MULTINATIONAL: SYNOPSIS

This is the story of a farmer who stood up against a massive multinational claiming.

One day representatives from the multinational company Monsanto visit Canadian farmer Percy Schmeiser and demand he surrender his canola (rape seed) crops. They sue him for \$200,000, claiming he has illegally used their patented genetically modified seeds.

Percy counter-sues Monsanto for environmental pollution and launches a nationwide campaign defending farmers' rights.

Modifying canola's genes makes the plant resistant to specific weed killers and, according to the makers, generally improves yield.

But Percy's campaign highlights important questions about GM crops and food with GM products in. In particular there are fears of "terminator technology" and worries about the impact on farming communities.

Schmeiser also accuses Monsanto of using intimidating tactics against him. For days, according to the farmer, detectives with cars were in front of his driveway, following him onto the fields, observing his every footstep.

Finally, the case goes to Canada's supreme court. The court finds in Monsanto's favour – but he doesn't have to pay a big fine. Percy argues the verdict raises more questions than it answers – including the biggest of all – "who owns life?"

DVD EXTRA: A Monsanto representative puts the company's point of view and explains their plans for new GM crops.

THE POWER OF A MULTINATIONAL: STOP THE FILM TESTS

(A) Play the film until the caption THE LEGAL BATTLE. Stop the film and answer the following questions.

- 1 What, according to the speaker, did the judge rule?
- 2 What is canola?
- 3 What was the great promise of the introduction of genetically modified plants?
- 4 How did Percy Schmeiser account for the appearance of GM plants on his land?
- 5 How are GM canola plants affected by Monsanto's Roundup herbicide?
- 6 How, according to Schmeiser, did he feel on discovering his crops were contaminated by GM canola?
- 7 What did Monsanto sue Schmeiser for in August 1998?
- 8 On what grounds did Schmeiser sue Monsanto?
- 9 What tactics did Monsanto pursue against him in summer 1999, according to Schmeiser?
- 10 Why, according to Schmeiser, did a bank close an account he held with them?

(B) Play the film until the caption HOW MONSANTO CONTROLS THE FARMERS. Stop the film and answer the following questions.

- 1 In 2001 how much did the court order Schmeiser to pay in damages and costs to Monsanto?
- 2 Why did Schmeiser think the court's decision was a "scandal"?
- 3 What did the judge rule? What did Schmeiser see as the upshot of the ruling?
- 4 How much did Schmeiser's legal expenses come to after he appealed against the judge's verdict?
- 5 What was the result of Schmeiser's appeal against the judge's verdict?
- 6 Which court did Schmeiser appeal to in 2008?

(C) Play the film until the caption HEALTH ISSUES . Stop the film and answer the following questions.

- 1 How could it be said that Monsanto's technology contract turns the farmer into an accomplice of the agro-chemical industry?
- 2 What right does a technology agreement between Monsanto and a farmer give the company over access to the farmer's property and information?
- 3 What might happen if a farmer violates the terms of his/her agreement with Monsanto?
- 4 What did Monsanto's investigators want to know from the farmer David Runyon?
- 5 Why are only a handful of farmers prepared to talk about what Monsanto is doing with their GM crops?
- 6 What advice does Troy Roush give to farmers who have non-GMO soya beans? Why, according to Roush, are such farmers the ones who are most at risk?
- 7 What is alleged to be causing farmers not to trust each other?

(D) Play the film until the caption THE VERDICT. Stop the film and answer the following questions.

- 1 How were food products with GM ingredients received in Europe?
- 2 In what way, according to Schmeiser, was the Canadian government negligent in its approach to GM?
- 3 What is the name of the active ingredient in Monsanto's herbicide Roundup? How might it affect you if you touch or swallow it?
- 4 How did Monsanto and Dupont become the biggest plant breeders in the world?
- 5 What fraction of the world's GM crops is produced by Monsanto and Dupont?
- 6 What's meant by "terminator technology"?

(E) Play the film until the end and answer the following questions.

- 1 What was the court's final verdict on Percy Schmeiser's case?
- 2 In what sense did Schmeiser view the verdict as a victory for him?
- 3 Why does Schmeiser think the court will have to revisit its verdict in four or five years time?
- 4 What was the farmers' right which Schmeiser says he was fighting to defend?
- 5 What, according to Percy Schmeiser, motivated him to take on Monsanto? Do you believe he was sincere?

THE POWER OF A MULTINATIONAL: WORKSHEET

- 1 Canola is
.....
- 2 The great promise of the introduction of genetically modified plants was more plants
- 3 Percy Schmeiser said GM plants appeared on his land because
.....
- 4 The GM canola plants ARE/ ARE NOT affected by Monsanto's Roundup herbicide. (DELETE AS APPLICABLE)
- 5 In August 1998 Monsanto sued Schmeiser for
- 6 In 2001 the court ordered Schmeiser to pay Monsanto \$in damages and costs.
- 7 In 2008 Schmeiser appealed to the
- 8 If a farmer violates the terms of his/her agreement with Monsanto, the corporation can profits or his crops and the farmer isn't allowed to
- 9is the active ingredient in Monsanto's herbicide Roundup. It can cause
- 10 Schmeiser says he was fighting to defend the farmer's right to

THE POWER OF A MULTINATIONAL: WORKSHEET (WITH ANSWERS)

1. Canola is A KIND OF RAPE-SEED DESIGNED TO MAKE COOKING OIL AND ANIMAL FEED
2. The great promise of the introduction of genetically modified plants was more PRODUCTIVE plants
3. Percy Schmeiser said GM plants appeared on his land because GM SEEDS FROM A NEIGHBOURING FARM WERE BLOWN OVER TO HIS LAND.
4. The GM canola plants ~~ARE~~/ ARE NOT affected by Monsanto's Roundup herbicide.
5. In August 1998 Monsanto sued Schmeiser for ILLEGALLY PLANTING MONSANTO'S PATENTED GM CANOLA
6. In 2001 the court ordered Schmeiser to pay Monsanto \$400,000 in damages and costs.
7. In 2008 Schmeiser appealed to the SUPREME COURT OF CANADA.
8. If a farmer violates the terms of his/her agreement with Monsanto, the corporation can TAKE ALL HIS PROFIT or DESTROY his crops and the farmer isn't allowed to SAY ANYTHING ABOUT IT TO ANYONE.
9. GLYPHOSATE is the active ingredient in Monsanto's herbicide Roundup. It can cause TISSUE DAMAGE, BLOODY VOMITING, CARDIAC ARRHYTHMIA, PULMONARY EDEMA
10. Schmeiser says he was fighting to defend the farmer's right to USE THEIR SEEDS FROM YEAR TO YEAR.

THE POWER OF A MULTINATIONAL: GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What is the great promise of the introduction of genetically modified plants? How do they work?
2. Why did Monsanto sue Percy Schmeiser?
3. How did Percy Schmeiser explain the appearance of GM plants on his land?
4. What tactics did Monsanto pursue against him in summer 1999, according to Schmeiser?
5. What happened in Schmeiser's legal battle with Monsanto? Which court did he appeal to in 2008?
6. How are farmers restricted by Monsanto's technology contract? What might happen to the farmer who violates the terms of his or her agreement with Monsanto?
7. What does Troy Roush advise farmers who have non-GMO soya beans? Why, according to Roush, are such farmers the ones who are most at risk?
8. What is alleged to be causing farmers not to trust each other?
9. How were food products with GM ingredients received in Europe?
10. In what way, according to Schmeiser, was the Canadian government negligent in its approach to GM?
11. What is the active ingredient in Monsanto's herbicide Roundup? How might it affect you if you touch or swallow it?
12. How did Monsanto and Dupont become the biggest plant breeders in the world? What fraction of the world's GM crops are produced by them?
13. What is "terminator technology"?
14. What was the court's final verdict on Percy Schmeiser's case? Did Schmeiser win or lose?
15. Why does Schmeiser think the court will have to revisit its verdict in four or five year's time?

THE POWER OF A MULTINATIONAL: DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. "There are shortages of food all over the world. People are dying in terrible famines. We need genetically modified crops to feed the global hungry." What do you think?
2. "Monsanto isn't interested in helping to feed the world. It just wants power and profit." Do you agree?
3. Percy Schmeiser says that ultimately his battle with Monsanto comes down to the question "Who owns life?" Is he being over-dramatic?
4. Imagine you were a government minister in a country where most people opposed the introduction of genetically modified crops. What attitude would you adopt?
5. Are the people who oppose GM crops just a load of fuddy-duddy luddites?
6. Would the introduction of GM crops be okay if it was controlled by governments rather than multinational corporations?
7. Would you care if the food you ate included ingredients from GM plants?
8. "Farmers aren't saints. They're businesspeople trying to make profits, just like Monsanto is, and if they were in Monsanto's position they would act just the same." What would you say to that?
9. Since earliest times farming has made use of technology and changed as technology has changed. Why shouldn't it make use of the latest technological development, in the shape of genetically modified crops?
10. What is it about big corporations that leads them to think they can push people around, do what they like, run the world?
11. We've had rule by tribal chiefs, kings, empires, nation states. Is the new reality that we're ruled by multinational organisations?
12. What if we could modify the genes of human beings to make them fitter, more resistant to diseases, live longer? Is this the way to go?