
Interview: Pat Trask

Monsanto's Power Grab: 'An Evil Objective'

On Feb. 16, 2006, a lawsuit was filed in the Northern District of California, calling on the court to rescind the deregulated status—that is, permission for commercial sale—of Monsanto's Roundup Ready alfalfa, that was granted in 2005 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Named are Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns; Ron DeHaven, Administrator of the Animal Plant Health and Inspection Service (APHIS); and Steve Johnson, Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

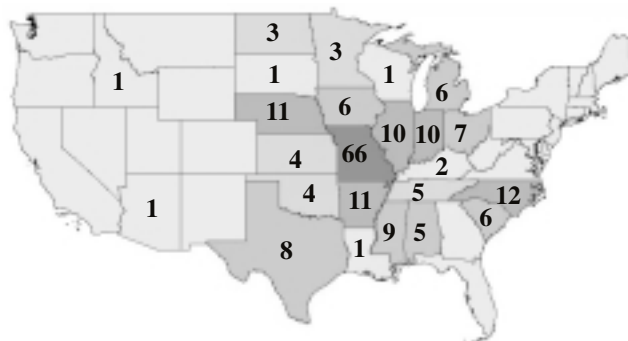
Calling the USDA's action on behalf of Monsanto "arbitrary and capricious," the suit was brought by a grouping including two farmers, one from Oregon, the other, Pat Trask, from South Dakota. As described in the 46-page court filing, "Trask Family Seeds has been ranching on the edge of the Black Hills of South Dakota since the Gold Rush days and has been a family business for four generations. Trask Family Seeds harvests alfalfa seed and hay from old, public varieties, commonly known as South Dakota Commons seed. Trask Family Seeds harvests about 15,000 acres of its own property and has agreements to custom harvest alfalfa seed from other ranches in the area."

Mr. Trask was interviewed on Feb. 21 by Marcia Merry Baker.

EIR: You are a plaintiff in a new legal action regarding Monsanto, whose very name now stands for globalization and control over food and agriculture. It's something like Enron and Exxon all rolled into one. And this comes at the same time as the government of Argentina has filed a friend-of-the-court brief, in a suit against Monsanto in their nation, because of some wild actions by Monsanto. So what is the who, what, where, and when of your court action?

Trask: The who, would be Center for Food Safety, Mr. Geertson, the Sierra Club, Dakota Rural Action, WORC (Western Organization of Resource Councils), and the Trask family—that's quite a bit of the plaintiffs, versus the

199 Lawsuits Filed Against Farmers by Monsanto, 1997-2005, by State



USDA/APHIS.

On June 15, 2005, the USDA/APHIS deregulated glyphosate-resistant¹ alfalfa varieties, which were applied for, patent and deregulation, by Monsanto/Forage Genetics. And that allowed Monsanto/Forage Genetics to sell glyphosate-resistant, or Roundup Ready alfalfa all over the United States. A USDA decision is the official litmus test of the government; so, in the minds of persons in all the various 50 states, that was the culmination of the Food and Drug Administration and Environmental Protection Agency giving clearance, already earlier in the process. And so it gave the impression that it was of no danger to the people or to the plants of the United States to use this Roundup Ready alfalfa.

Our contention as plaintiffs is, that there are a number of very serious issues that stand between a green light of clearance and no-harm-done by planting this GMO [genetically modified] alfalfa, which would have been uncovered by USDA/APHIS and other persons of input, had they done the full environmental impact study and statement. But they didn't do that.

EIR: Could you establish some key points about the importance of alfalfa for the food chain, and how it is cultivated, to make clear to people what a major action has been taken by the USDA and Monsanto?

Trask: Alfalfa is considered the king of all forages, because it is a legume, which mixes nitrogen back into the soil. And nitrogen is the one thing that all plants have to have in order to thrive. So alfalfa is a natural and holistic form of nitrogen replacement, and has a function with all crops, because of its inherent value of restoring nitrogen. It is king of forages, because it is the safest and cheapest supply of protein for animals that is known.

1. Glyphosate is a herbicide marketed by Monsanto under the patent name Roundup. The company also markets Roundup Ready crop seeds, including corn, soybeans, and now alfalfa, which were created to be resistant to that herbicide.

EIR: I understand, they often call it green manure?

Trask: Yes. When you return it from its growing, vegetative state, by plowing it under, to maximize the placement of nitrogen and soil tilth, then that's "green manure."

As the king of forages, alfalfa plays into the dairy and beef industry, and all other animal agriculture, as the top-line protein supplement. Of course, proteins are amino acids, the fundamental building blocks of all life, and all organic matter. That's what underpins all of our diets, and animal diets, and everything that is organic. So having that be right, is of critical import to the human race.

Alfalfa is a principal part of all dairy rations; so all dairy products are kind of turning on alfalfa as a fundamental component.

It comes into the food chain indirectly in the dairy, and the beef and meat aspect, but it also comes in directly in the sprout industry. And that's real huge in the Orient. So America exports a lot of sprouts.

But the magnitude of alfalfa is that it's the fourth largest cash crop that the United States produces—behind corn, wheat, and soybeans. The United States is the largest producer of alfalfa and alfalfa seed in the world. South Dakota is the biggest state in the United States for alfalfa, in terms of acreage.

EIR: In some places across the country, you can get several crops, if the water table, and temperature are right?

Trask: If you have the precipitation and the length of growing season, four to five cuttings are possible.

EIR: Before turning to the wild actions of Monsanto, a bit of economic history of alfalfa. It originated in Asia way back, but was introduced and promoted in North America only since the mid-19th Century, right?

Trask: Right. It was first introduced into the United States in South Dakota. South Dakota State University is probably pre-eminent amongst all the land-grant universities in the study of alfalfa, because it was first brought to South Dakota, which replicated the latitude and longitude of where it was predominant across the ocean, before it was brought here.

EIR: One more thing about alfalfa—which is important to know, in order to understand the menace of the USDA/Monsanto action—is that it's perennial. If you seed it, it might come back for two or five years or so.

Trask: That's a very significant point, and that's one that drew us into this conflict here right away, because this is the first time that GMO perennial plants were offered for sale and placement into the fields and soils of America. Always before, the other bio-tech plants and crops were annuals, or bi-annuals.

Once you plant a perennial, it just lives on and on and on. And then it goes to seed. For a perennial like alfalfa, up to 30-40% of the seed is hard seed, which means it can lie in the



USDA/Doug Wilson

An alfalfa field in California. Monsanto is grabbing control over family farms, by filing lawsuits against farmers whose crops contain genetic material from the company's patented seeds—even if that material wafts into the property on a passing breeze.

soil for decades before it germinates and sprouts. That means that once you've introduced a GMO perennial to a field, it would be quite close to never that you could re-establish that field as free of the genetics of the GMO chromosomes.

So, let's say, you planted a field and you had seedlings coming, and you wanted to clean them out. That wouldn't be difficult to do. But once you had those alfalfa plants—they are deep-rooted, it's very difficult to stop them, plus their hard seed, from reproducing, and with their same genetically altered chromosomes.

EIR: In typical farm practices in recent decades, you don't put herbicide on alfalfa, because it has its own canopy. Maybe 80-90% of alfalfa grown in the United States wouldn't have herbicide on it. So the issue might then be just that there was residual herbicide in the field. Say you had previously grown Roundup Ready corn. The argument from Monsanto is that, that's why they are pushing the Roundup Ready alfalfa seed on you? Of course, all that means in reality, is that they are locking up what seeds and chemicals are in use, of all kinds, entirely under their control.

Trask: Yes, they are wanting to have control of the seed industry flow through their cash register.

EIR: It's said that Monsanto and Dow Chemical—which bought Pioneer Hi-Bred awhile back—the two of them alone control over 60% of all seeds—corn and soybeans—sold in the U.S.A. as of 2004. It's probably worse now. And it's like locking up the means of life, from the seeds onward.

Back to this perennial matter. The story used to be that, if you let your stallion loose, and it went and mated with your neighbor's mare, and there was an offspring—the foal might be either an inconvenience, or a benefit to the neighbor—but you for sure, could not claim a right to gain from

the offspring. In fact, your neighbor could even sue you for ruining the genetics taking place on their farm.

But now, with this Monsanto seed running around, the situation is created where you could be sued if some of it just flew into your field?

Trask: It's pretty much like Monsanto's stud is going to run into everybody's pasture, and not only will they own all the colts, but they'll own all the mares too!

EIR: Monsanto is suing farmers like crazy, for patent infringement suits right now.

Trask: We know that Monsanto has already sued at least 90 farm families for having tendered for sale, or have in their fields, without Monsanto's legitimate contractual authority, seeds that are carrying the bio-tech chromosomes—the GMO seed.

The average reward to Monsanto from those lawsuits is about \$412,000. The highest one was \$3,052,000; the lowest one was just under \$5,000.

In addition to the 90 lawsuits that they filed against farm families, they did investigations of more than 500 other families, most of which were settled out of court, and most of those settlements are not well documented. But the ones that were in court include not a small number that were merely farmers who had cross-pollination into their fields, and offered the produce from their own fields for sale, that was carrying the cross-pollinated bio-tech genes.

It is true that in a number of cases, Monsanto gravitated to the use of forging farmers' signatures on tech agreement documents, in order to solidify their case.

EIR: And the time period involved in these suits is merely since 1998 or so, right? It's not that these suits accumulated over decades. It was only in 1996 that Monsanto went into what's euphemistically called "life sciences," and shed its chemical operations, right? Less than ten years.

Trask: Yes. And one of the interesting things is that, back around the mid-1990s, Monsanto was denying any and all claims that glyphosate, or Roundup, was going to be capable of causing weed shifts—super weeds, that adapted genetically to resist glyphosate. They said it would never happen, because it doesn't have any residual effect in the soil, and they hadn't been able to produce mutations by radiation, and so there was not going to be any weed shift, and super-weed evolution.

But there is a long list of super weeds, including things like water hemp, that are kind of ravaging the horizons of Ohio, and some others. Horse weed—I can't remember all the weeds that are on the list, but there are a lot of them that have become, or are approaching, noxious weed status, from the effect of repeated glyphosate usage as a herbicide management practice.

This is a serious concern of the people who are opposing the USDA decision to deregulate, because it's probably



Monsanto



"Roundup" is the name for a range of agricultural herbicides, based on glyphosate, and Roundup-branded products, marketed by Monsanto Co., which also markets a number of food crop seeds, under exclusive patent-rights, which have been genetically modified to be resistant to Roundup. The patented varieties are thus known as "Roundup Ready" soybeans, Roundup Ready corn, and the latest, Roundup Ready alfalfa.

about ten years' time before glyphosate will become obsolete, but then we have the new concomitant super-weeds plaguing our horizon, which demand heavy herbicides.

Presently, we have almost no herbicide being used for the production of alfalfa. So it's drawing the alfalfa industry, and the alfalfa forage industry, into not only glyphosate usage, but heavy chemical usage, which is going to just follow in the sequence, as it has already.

EIR: So you are bringing out a special aspect of the monoculture that is being imposed by the actions of Monsanto, and a few other companies, like Dow, here and internationally.

Trask: Repeatedly, we have raised the question to Monsanto: If you wanted people to know that they could use glyphosate, or Roundup, to clean annual weeds out of alfalfa fields, why didn't you simply re-label the product, and notify people, that they could use meager dosages—like 8 ounces of Roundup per acre—to clean annual weeds out of alfalfa fields early in the Spring, before the alfalfa is five or six inches tall?

If you had just sought a re-labeling, people might have just used Roundup, when they had a weed problem, which is not normally. If you have a good stand, the canopy protects the field predominantly, from weeds. So there is very little herbicide usage with alfalfa, other than when they try to eliminate the crop, to go to a different crop.

So, the question was asked: Why didn't you just re-label? There has never been an answer. There is no answer, because Monsanto is recommending 16 to 32 ounces per application on GMO Roundup Ready alfalfa. We have, for probably 12 to 13 years, used 8 ounces, when we had a problem with annual weeds, like in the Spring after a wet Fall, when a lot of cheat-grass germinated, and was coming early in the alfalfa fields. And an 8-ounce application before the alfalfa is five inches tall, just cleans it out. And the most

How Cartels Got the Right To Patent Life

A short history of U.S. law concerning food crops, shows how the traditional governing principle that seeds and genetic advances—as the means to life—are not appropriate for private patenting, was overturned over the past 30 years, on behalf of the private interests of the cartels increasingly dominating food commodities. The key developments:

In 1930, the Plant Patent Act (PPA) was passed, to give some marketing protection (such as exclusive rights to the name of a new rose) to those marketing flowers and ornamentals, but the PPA *specifically excluded any plant that could be considered as a food crop from any patent protection.*

However, in 1970, the Plant Variety Protection Act (PVPA), for the first time, gave some private rights for specific varieties of food crop seeds, in the form of certificates, not patents, for periods of up to 25 years. Still, farmers and researchers could save, replant, and experiment with the seeds.

Then came a 1980 Supreme Court decision approving

patenting of living organisms, opening the door to patenting of any life form under potentially total private control. In 1985, the U.S. Patent Office ruled that plants could be protected under the powerful concept of the industrial patent, meaning no exemptions for farmers or researchers. University-based, and other public science labs were devastated.

Over the 1990s, sweeping “patent rights to life” were granted, with Monsanto in the lead for soybeans and cotton. In 1998, Monsanto started its GMO alfalfa work with the University of Montana, from which Monsanto got its Roundup Ready alfalfa. Broad genetics patent rights, including for food grains, have also been included in the GATT/WTO “intellectual property rights” treaties.

Rearguard actions by Congress—including the 1994 Plant Variety Protection Act, and certain court suits, attempted to restrict this trend, but with little effect. (The PVPA set up a system of 20-year certificates for new plant varieties, whether or not they were genetically modified.)

Then in December 2001, a U.S. Supreme Court decision (*JEM Ag Supply, Inc. v. Pioneer Hi Bred International Inc.*, Dec. 10, 2001) gutted both the 1930 Plant Protection Act, and the 1994 PVPA, thus opening the door for any plant or animal to be patented under the strict Utility Patent law, no holds barred.

—Colin Lowry

that it would do, is cause the alfalfa to look like it had a little frost on it.

EIR: To underscore your point, people should know that in Argentina and Brazil, for example, Monsanto alone controls over 90% of all herbicide sales.

Trask: The question was asked in a legislative hearing in the capital, in Pierre, South Dakota, a few days ago, and the Secretary of Agriculture of South Dakota had assembled about 30 legislators. Monsanto and Forage Genetics had assembled about five or six or seven salaried employees to speak to the issues for the legislature, and for the South Dakota Secretary of Agriculture.

During the question and answer period, it was projected by Monsanto that Roundup Ready alfalfa will give producers a great boost and profitability in production. One of the legislators of South Dakota asked the question: What is the relative productivity, in pounds per acre, of Roundup Ready alfalfa compared to conventional, South Dakota Commons alfalfa seed?

The question was asked of two forage specialists from South Dakota State University—sent there by the Dean of Agriculture. And the answer to the question was, *there is no difference.*

So then, ask yourself: If it costs five times as much to buy it; and it causes you to start putting herbicide on, at the rate of 32 ounces per application, and recommending three applications per year; and there is no increased production, or pounds per acre; and you can't clean it out of the field once you have planted it, if you're in an area where alfalfa goes to seed, and it has the hard seed lying there—*then what's good about it?*

The obvious answer is that it was never GMO'd to help the world feed itself. It was GMO'd to give the license to control all alfalfa to Monsanto, because it's an inevitable reality in all states where seed is grown and harvested, that GMO genetics will spread across the state. Once it's planted in that state, the bees are going to carry that pollen with the hot winds, and it's going to spread—say two and a half miles per growing season—and you have gene drift spreading over all the alfalfa fields and seeds.

EIR: And I understand that Monsanto will assert something like, “If you don't want the wind to carry it, or bees to cross-pollinate, just create a buffer zone—ha, ha!” Meaning, take your land out of production.

Trask: Well, the Secretary of Agriculture, Larry Gabriel, reminded Monsanto that in their own publication—and they

talk about how cross-pollination will never happen under good management, because it's always harvested before first bloom—the Secretary of Agriculture said, that in South Dakota, which is the real world and not the Monsanto world, there are areas that are sub-irrigated, that will go to seed every year, and a lot of years, will not be cut, if there is not enough moisture to justify haying those areas. So those areas are sub-irrigated, low, wet areas, and road ditches, and they are all over South Dakota, and they do go to seed. There is a pollen drift; there is a gene flow. So the world of Monsanto is not the real world.

Those things weren't taken into consideration, when the USDA deregulated. They ignored the real-world aspects, and only looked at the hypothetical, make-believe world of Monsanto.

And Monsanto knows what the score is.

EIR: To continue with the “world of Monsanto,” which is the world of these globalizers—the chemical companies, pharmaceutical houses, and all the commodity-control cartels which we are seeing reach the point of nearly total control: I understand that your family farm operations have included seed raising for four generations, and you deal with cattle, too. Could you comment on the positioning of Monsanto, in alignment with other cartel companies, all along the feed and food chain?

It was announced in February that the Australia Agriculture Corp., the biggest cattle producer in that nation, is working to set up a million-head beef cattle herd, and lining up the feed supply lines, etc. Turn here to the United States, to dairying, for example. We have had the shift of the downgrading of local and regional family-scale dairy herds that traditionally supplied population centers with fluid milk, and instead, there is the pattern of mega-herds in California, Texas, Idaho, and so on. Even in the Upper Midwest, where 25% of the U.S. population lives, and their milk shed was traditionally from the region, now you see such concentrations, where, for example, two new 10,000-milk-cow herds were set up in Indiana.

How does this fit into “the world of Monsanto”? The action you're taking against the Agriculture Department, over Monsanto's grab for alfalfa—the top fodder crop—is throwing the spotlight on the fact that this interlock of companies is working from the farm and feed end, right through to the livestock and processing to the other end, to your dinner table.

Trask: They have a comprehensive approach. Their objective can be concluded logically none other than that they desire a pre-eminent control over the world's food supply—quantity and quality. . . .

EIR: Monsanto and Cargill technically operate through “partnerships” of various kinds, as do the other cartel agriculture companies.

Trask: They have a significant merger in their efforts. Monsanto had bought out Cargill's seed division. So each one of them—there is kind of a movement, or sorting, if you will, into specialties.

EIR: Mr. LaRouche said, a couple weeks ago, in terms of the policy fight against all this, and the economic breakdown of nations, that Monsanto should be thrown out of South America altogether!

Trask: Well, I'm thrilled by that.

You know, I've given the analogy, after reading a book about Monsanto's imperialistic brutalism against farmers over bio-technology in GMO crops, and I've made the analogy that reading that book about Monsanto's legal assaults, makes Monsanto compared to other companies, kind of like making Al Capone be like Robin Hood!

They're to be feared. They're a dynamic company which has an evil objective.

EIR: You are familiar with the series of pamphlets put out by LaRouche PAC, called, “The Children of Satan”? With Monsanto, you might be talking about the Corporations of Satan? One of the Children of Satan historical reports dealt with the corporate syndicates, which called themselves at the time of the First World War, the Synarchist International—financial circles and corporations. They included those famous chemical companies, such as I.G. Farben, that tied up patent rights in the 1930s and 1940s, and didn't want the United States to use them. Monsanto has a pedigree along these lines, wouldn't you say?

Trask: Yes, I would.

But I would like to add, I really believe that the people of our nation—and this is particularly true of the agricultural people, who I affectionately refer to, as the proverbial shepherds. The sons and daughters who have been drawn into various degrees of complicity with these global companies' objective, they are awakening to the folly of this.

And I believe that Almighty God has afforded this opportunity to withdraw from the lunacy of the globalistic approach. And I think these companies are largely rivetted on the fact that it's not well in Glockamora, for multinational, mafia-type companies.

The people in the United States are waking up to it. That's visible when you talk about a survey about country-of-origin labelling, and 85-88% of Americans want to know where their food is coming from. That's not a statistic that is friendly to Monsanto, or Smithfield, or Tyson/IBP.

So I think we're going to have a big turn-around here, and I think that it's imminently happening.

EIR: The government of Argentina will be glad to hear this!

Trask: I'm thrilled that the Argentinians are having the courage to tell the mafia, go ahead and pull the trigger, because there's more just like me!