



The vicious cycle of poison

Despite the condemnations and bans of Lasso/Alachlor and other α -Chloroacetamides, carcinogenic and reprotoxic herbicides, produced on EU land by Bayer-Monsanto until 2013 and Syngenta until 2020 for export, contaminating rice and other foodstuffs, then imported into the EU

Paul François, French farmer who led Monsanto to be condemned and the networks fighting against pesticides

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In April 2004, while working, Paul François, a farmer, inhaled the vapors of a Monsanto herbicide, Lasso, whose active ingredient is alachlor (carcinogenic) to which is added a dreaded adjuvant, mono-chlorobenzene (neurotoxic). This was followed by repeated comas, violent headaches, loss of consciousness, and numerous episodes of hospitalization that have never ceased since. The link between his health problems and his intoxication was established and recognized as a relapse of his work accident. Today, Paul François still suffers from serious disorders, in particular neurological disorders (headaches, loss of consciousness, hospitalization...) which sometimes prevent him from getting up, working and living normally.

Bayer-Monsanto condemned in court

In 2007, in parallel with his request for recognition as an occupational disease, Paul François decided, together with his lawyer François Lafforgue (Law firm Teissonnière-Topaloff-Lafforgue-Andreu & Associés), to sue the American firm Monsanto, notably for "lack of information on the label". After winning the case in front of the high court (February 2012) and the Court of Appeal of Lyon (September 2015), whose decision was overturned by the Court of Cassation, which then referred the case to the Court of Appeal of Lyon, differently composed. On April 11, 2019, in Lyon, the courts recognized the total responsibility of Monsanto - now Bayer-Monsanto - in the intoxication of Paul François and its serious health consequences. This decision has been confirmed by the Court of Cassation. However, far from the full compensation provided for by the French civil law, the justice institution consecrates the impunity of the Bayer-Monsanto Company by only accompanying this condemnation with a miserable compensation, outrageous and almost insulting to Paul François and his family. This type of decision could dissuade the victims of pesticides from calling into question the responsibility of the multinational firms that poison the world.

Lasso

To recall, the product commercialized under the name Lasso in 1967 was withdrawn from the market in 1985 in Canada, in the United States, as well as in certain countries like Belgium or the Netherlands, members of the European community which prohibited it on their territory in the 90s. It is only in 2007, 3 years after the intoxication of the farmer in France, that the European Commission decided to ban the use of alachlor in all member countries, decision justified by the fact that it represented a danger for the user. Moreover, alachlor, the active ingredient of the product, was classified as a probable carcinogen in 2008 by the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency, American regulatory agency). The adjuvant, monochlorobenzene, was present in 50% of the Lasso. As a proven neurotoxic agent, it is listed in the French occupational disease tables.

However, these decisions of ban on the European territory, and the court ruling in the case of the French farmer, did not prevent the European agency (EFSA) from authorizing the marketing of pesticide substances of the same chemical family of α -(chloroacetanilide which present the same mode of action as alachlor. Substituting a dangerous substance with a new, almost similar one constitutes a danger to the health of professionals and populations. It reflects an obscene blindness of the health authorities to the mistakes of the past.

Lasso was manufactured in Antwerp, Belgium, in the Chemical Bayer factory, to be exported to Asian countries and distributed to rice farmers in Asia. Even Japan, which has a regulatory agency, still allows its use. But Bayer-Monsanto has taken the precaution of keeping the company's name off the packaging and has contracted out marketing to a "third party". Despite the European ban, consumers can buy rice, imported from producing countries, on which this dangerous pesticide, exported from Europe, has been applied. An alachlor-like material, acetochlor, is now manufactured in Antwerp for use in Ukraine and Kazakhstan. Metazachlor is still authorized on Belgian soil and is found in excess of the authorized concentration in the groundwater.

The extent of carcinogenic and neurological diseases caused by 17 α -Chloroacetamides in farmers and consumers, in Europe and elsewhere, is made invisible by the lack of recording of these diseases in exposed people by public health institutions. According to ECHA, Belgium exported nearly 1164 substances in 2022 and France 1727 while Germany exports 3152.

The European Commission has the power to end this vicious circle

In order to exit from the vicious cycle of pesticide use in agriculture, we ask the European Commission to definitely ban the manufacture, use and export of Lasso, alachlor and all other related substances. The European Union must adopt an agricultural policy in support of farmers who are trying to free themselves from the chemical grip, in order to achieve, in the long term, a ban on all the chemical pesticides.

All the organizations and citizens present support Paul François in his fight for full compensation for all his damages. We encourage all the pesticide victims to go to court in order to end the impunity of corporate executives and shareholders who are intoxicating us in the name of profit.