



New Internationalist

The people, the ideas, the action in the fight for global justice

Fighting against Monsanto

NEW INTERNATIONALIST EASIER ENGLISH
INTERMEDIATE READY LESSON

This lesson:

Speaking

Reading – 7 short stories

Vocabulary

Group dictation



What do you know about Monsanto?



Decide which of these are true:

Monsanto:

- a) is a large American multinational company.
- b) says it is a sustainable company that supports farmers around the world.
- c) sells GM (genetically modified) seeds to farmers.
- d) is a charity.
- e) is involved in a lot of legal action.

What do you think the first story is about? Use these words from the story to predict:

bees

Monsanto

soybeans

judge

pesticide

damage

honey

Europe

environment

Now read short story 1:

Who won – Monsanto or The People?



You have 1 minute to read
the story on the next slide ...

Bees in Mexico

A small group of Mexican beekeepers have stopped Monsanto from planting thousands of hectares of GM soybeans. A judge in Yucatán cancelled the permission the government had already given to Monsanto (allowing them to plant *Roundup Ready* soybeans on 253,000 hectares).

Scientific evidence that GM soy crops are dangerous for honey production convinced the judge. Monsanto uses glyphosate pesticide and this damages the environment, soil, water and groups of bees. Mexico exports a lot of honey to Europe, and people would stop buying it if the honey has GM pollen.

Story 2: 2 mins to read

1) Who won –

Monsanto or The

People?

2) Which country?

Farmers are not criminals

It was because of ten days of protests by many indigenous people, trade unions, farmers' and women's groups. In September 2014, the Guatemalan Congress cancelled the 'Monsanto law' – the whole country hated it. Under this law, all farmers grow corn and beans from natural seeds would be criminals.

If these natural seeds had contamination from GM seeds from insect pollination or wind, the farmers would have to buy a licence for seed from a big company (eg. Monsanto) or go to court.

Story 3: 2 mins to read

**1) Who won –
Monsanto or The
People?**

2) Which food?

Not your tomatoes

It was because of European activists that the European Patent Office took away a Monsanto patent for tomatoes in December 2014. The activists, from *No Patents on Seeds!* noticed a patent: Monsanto was saying that tomatoes with a natural resistance to a fungal disease (botrytis) was a new GM invention.

‘This is an important success,’ said Cristoph Then from *No Patents on Seeds!* ‘This patent was based on fraud, abuse of patent law and biopiracy. The patent could have been used to control important genetic resources.’

Story 4: 2 mins to read

**1) Who won –
Monsanto or The
People?**

2) Where?

Mothers protesting

Zen Honeycutt is the mother of three children. One of her children has allergies that are so bad she could die of them. The allergy and autism were not so bad when she gave her children organic food and stayed away from GMOs and pesticides. In 2012 she started *Moms Across America* to find with mothers with similar experiences.

In 18 months the mothers had more than 400 meetings in a new national campaign for freedom from GMOs. In January 2015, Honeycutt was one of the activists who spoke at Monsanto's annual shareholders meeting.

She told CEO Hugh Grant: 'Please stop this. Stop poisoning our children.'

Speaking

1) What have you learnt about Monsanto?

2) Why are they involved in so much legal action?

3) Who is more powerful – Monsanto or The People?



Match these words from the stories to definitions

1/ pesticide

2/ contamination

3/ patent

4/ indigenous

5/ pollination

6/ allergy

7/ shareholders



- a) original people in a country
- b) people who own part of a company
- c) chemical to kill insects
- d) taking the male part of a plant to the female part – often done by bees
- e) making something dirty or not pure eg. with poison
- f) a bad reaction of the body to food, dust or poison
- g) legal protection for something you have invented

Jigsaw reading and group dictation

Get into 3 groups: A, B and C

Each group will have a different story:

1/ Read your story to find out :

a) who won – Monsanto, The People, or neither?

b) where? who? which food?

2/ Re-group: ABC and tell each other the answers about your 3 different stories

3/ Dictate your story to the others in your group

4/ Swop stories to check the dictation

A) Stopping the Monsanto law

‘If my grandfather was alive, he would hate it!’ writes Pamela Boakye. She comes from a farming family in Ghana. She supports the campaign by farmers, fishers and others against the new Plant Breeders Bill (the ‘Monsanto Law’) there.

This law would make it illegal for traditional farmers to save and exchange seed. Also, it would force them to pay money to big seed companies like Monsanto. The government tried to pass this law during the World Cup, hoping no-one would notice. But farmers, fishers and campaigners saw this and got together in *Food Sovereignty Ghana* to fight it.

There is international support eg. from the British charity *Global Justice Now*. Their email campaign got 80 British MPs to promise not to support the ‘Monsanto Law’ (from the British- and US-backed *New Alliance for Food and Security Programme*). The fight has not finished yet.

B) Organic farmer in Australia carries on fighting

Steve Marsh is an Australian organic farmer. He is brave enough to fight against Monsanto and keep fighting. He is getting more supporters. Steve comes from a farming community in Kojonup, Western Australia. In 2010, the state government stopped the ban on GM canola (rapeseed).

Steve's neighbour started growing Monsanto canola. The wind blew some of the seed onto Steve's fields. So there was 70-per-cent contamination and Steve lost his organic certification. Monsanto takes no responsibility for this.

Steve decided to fight for his right to farm with no GM crops and took this to court. He lost in May 2014. And now he has to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars - legal costs and fees. But he has appealed. And *Australia's Food Foundation* is raising money and support. This is an important test case.

C) Vandana Shiva fighting

Vandana Shiva has been fighting for many years for biodiversity, seed and food sovereignty. She is fighting against the control of big companies like Monsanto. She has said many times that Monsanto's seed patents are making Indian farmers poor. So people attack her.

Michael Specter attacked her in the New Yorker in 2014. In her reply, Shiva said: 'I sued Monsanto in 1999 for its illegal Bt cotton trials in India. And after that, people have said they will kill me, people have hacked my websites and turned them into porn sites, and the chairman of a girls' college that my grandfather started has been harassed. People have tried to stop the work of *Navdanya* [a group of seed savers and organic producers] by trying to pay my colleagues to leave – and they have failed.'

Homework:

More reading:

1/ Read the original of the 7 stories:

<http://newint.org/features/2015/04/01/groups-against-monsanto/>

2/ Read more about Monsanto in Easier English first (then the original):

http://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Issue_481

