

Pinkertons on the Farm

FOR CENTURIES, farmers have allowed certain crops to grow in their fields and have saved seeds from those crops for planting in the next growing season.

Now, Monsanto and hired Pinkerton detectives are cracking down on farmers who "illegally" save and replant seeds containing "patented technology."

More than 45 million acres of U.S. farmland is currently planted with genetically engineered seed. These include seeds engineered by Monsanto with its herbicide, RoundUp, and a natural pesticide, Bt.

Monsanto's Kate Marshall says that the St. Louis-based biotech giant is "vigorously pursuing growers who pirate any brand or variety" of the company's genetically altered seed.

Monsanto has hired five full-time and a number of part-time investigators to follow up on all seed piracy leads it receives. Marshall says that the company has hired Pinkerton, a private detective firm, and a number of outside law firms, to help investigate and prosecute the cases.

To date, Monsanto has opened more than 475 seed piracy cases nationwide, generated from over 1,800 leads. More than 250 of these cases are under active investigation, Marshall says. And more than 100 cases have been settled.

Recently, for example, David Chaney of Reed, Kentucky, admitted to illegally saving and replanting RoundUp Ready soybeans. Monsanto says that Chaney acknowledged that in return for other goods, he "illegally traded the pirated seed with neighbors and an area seed cleaner for the purpose of replanting." Monsanto says that Chaney was forced to pay "a \$35,000 royalty payment as well as provide full documentation confirming the disposal of his unlawful soybean crop."

Under an agreement reached with Monsanto, Chaney will be required to make available all of his soybean production records for Monsanto's inspection over the next five years.

The company has forced other farmers to destroy their crops and has confiscated seed, Marshall says.

"When growers save and replant patented seed, there is less incentive for companies to invest in future technologies that will ultimately benefit farmers," says Scott Baucum, chief of Monsanto's seed piracy enforcement arm.

Liquid Candy

TEENAGE BOYS AND GIRLS DRINK TWICE AS MUCH soda pop as milk, whereas 20 years ago they drank nearly twice as much milk as soda, according to "Liquid Candy," a report released by the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) in October.

According to the report, the average 13- to 18-year-old male who consumes soda pop consumes more than three 12-ounce cans per day, while 10 percent of those males drink seven or more cans a day.

The average 13- to 18-year-old female soda drinker imbibes more than two cans a day, and 10 percent of females consume five or more cans a day.

Overall, people in the United States are consuming twice as much soda pop as they did 25 years ago. And they're spending \$54 billion a year on it. That's twice what is spent on books every year.

"Kids are drowning in soda pop," says Michael Jacobson, executive director of CSPI. "It's become their main beverage, providing many kids with 20 percent to 40 percent of their calories. Soda is squeezing more-nutritious foods and beverages out of their diets. It's high time that parents limited their children's soft-drink consumption and demanded that local schools get rid of their soft-drink vending machines, just as they have banished smoking."

Jacobson says that Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, and other companies are relentless marketers, having spent over \$6 billion in the last decade on advertising. Recently, these companies have started paying millions of dollars for exclusive marketing rights in schools and other places frequented by adolescents.

CSPI cited bigger serving sizes as a major reason for increased consumption. In the past 40 years, bottles and cans have ballooned from six ounces to 12 ounces and recently to 20 ounces. Back in the 1950s, Coke's "family size" bottle was only 26 ounces.

Pie-ing Corporate Criminals

A PIE-THROWING CAMPAIGN aimed at "corporate crime" has been launched in the United States.

In October, Nobel Laureate economist Milton Friedman was hit in the face with a pie while attending a conference at the Marriot Hotel in San Francisco during a conference on "School Choice and Corporate America." Later in the month, Robert Shapiro, chief executive officer of Monsanto, was struck in the face with a tofu creme pie while attending a "State of the World Forum" conference at San Francisco's Fairmont Hotel.

In a press release put out over the Internet, The "Anti-Genetix" splinter faction of the Biotic Baking Brigade (BBB) claimed credit for the assault.

"The Biotic Baking Brigade doesn't just promise pie in the sky, we deliver," says a BBB operative named Apple. The group says that its campaign is aimed at "corporate crime."

According to the press release, after Shapiro gave his speech and left the stage, he stopped to engage in a dialogue with a heckler on "genetic engineering and corporate crime."

"It was at this point that BBB Field Agents Custard and Lemon Meringue approached him and let fly with tofu creme and sweet potato pies, the first of which reached its target," the statement reads.

"Monsanto has engaged in ruthless intimidation of critics, and has embarked upon an aggressive global takeover of seed, chemical and pharmaceutical companies, with an aim to control world food distribution," says Agent Apple. "It is conducting an intensive PR 'Greenwash' campaign in order to promote itself as an eco-friendly corporation. We will not be fooled, and we will wage our gastronomical struggle with epicurean passion." ■