

Food, Agriculture and the Global Ecology: Rolling Back the Tide of Pesticide Poison, Corruption and Looming Mass Extinction

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*An anthropogenic mass extinction is underway that will affect all life on the planet and humans will struggle to survive the phenomenon. So claims **Dr Rosemary Mason** in a [paper](#) (2015) in the *Journal of Biological Physics and Chemistry*. Loss of biodiversity is the most urgent of the environmental problems because this type of diversity is critical to ecosystem services and human health. Mason argues that the modern chemical-intensive industrialised system of food and agriculture is the main culprit.*

[New research](#) conducted in Germany supports the contention that we are heading for an “ecological Armageddon” – similar to the situation described by Mason. The study shows the abundance of flying insects has plunged by three-quarters over the past 25 years. The research data was gathered in nature reserves across Germany and has implications for all landscapes dominated by agriculture as it seems likely that the widespread use of pesticides is an important factor.

Cited in The Guardian (see previous link), **Prof Dave Goulson** of Sussex University, UK, and part of the team behind the new study, says,

“We appear to be making vast tracts of land inhospitable to most forms of life... If we lose the insects then everything is going to collapse.”

In the same piece, it is noted that flying insects are vital because they pollinate flowers. Moreover, many, not least bees, are important for pollinating key food crops. Most fruit crops are insect-pollinated and insects also provide food for many animals, including birds, bats, some mammals, fish, reptiles and amphibians. Flies, beetles and wasps are also predators and important decomposers, breaking down dead plants and animals. And insects form the base of thousands of food chains; their disappearance is a principal reason Britain’s farmland birds have more than halved in number since 1970. Indeed the 2016 [State of Nature Report](#) found that one in 10 UK wildlife species are threatened with extinction, with numbers of certain creatures having plummeted by two thirds since 1970.

Rosemary Mason has been providing detailed accounts of massive insect declines on her own nature reserve in South Wales for some time. She has published first-hand accounts of the destruction of biodiversity on the reserve in various books and documents that have been submitted to relevant officials and pesticide regulation authorities in the UK and beyond. The research from Germany validates her findings.

Mason has written [numerous open letters](#) to officials citing reams of statistical data to support the contention agrochemicals, especially Monsanto's glyphosate-based Roundup, have devastated the natural environment and have also led to spiraling rates of illness and disease, especially among children.

She indicates how the widespread use on agricultural crops of neonicotinoid insecticides and the herbicide glyphosate, both of which cause immune suppression, make species vulnerable to emerging infectious pathogens, driving large-scale wildlife extinctions, including essential pollinators.

Providing evidence to show how human disease patterns correlate remarkably well with the rate of glyphosate usage on corn, soy and wheat crops, which has increased due to 'Roundup Ready' crops, Mason indicates how our over-reliance on chemicals in agriculture is causing irreparable harm to all beings on this planet.

The global pesticides industry has created chemicals of mass destruction and succeeded in getting many of their poison on the commercial market by highly questionable means:

“The EPA has been routinely lying about the safety of pesticides since it took over pesticide registrations in 1970.” [Carol Van Strum](#).

Van Strum highlights the faked data and fraudulent tests that led to many highly toxic agrochemicals reaching the market - and they still remain in use, regardless of the devastating impacts on wildlife and human health.

The blatant disregard over the use of these substances by regulatory agencies around the world is apparent. At each stage of her letter-writing campaign to make the authorities call agrochemical manufactures to account, Mason has been frustrated by the lack of concern demonstrated by officialdom. This indifference to the poisoning of both humans and the environment is a result of high-level collusion (which she goes to great lengths to document) and institutionalised corruption between government and the agrochemical corporations.

The research from Germany follows a warning by a chief scientific adviser to the UK government who claimed that regulators around the world have [falsely assumed that it is safe to use pesticides at industrial scales](#) across landscapes and the “effects of dosing whole landscapes with chemicals have been largely ignored.”

And prior to that particular warning, there was [a report](#) delivered to the UN Human Rights Council saying that pesticides have catastrophic impacts on the environment, human health and society as a whole. Authored by **Hilal Elver**, special rapporteur on the right to food, and **Baskut Tuncak**, special rapporteur on toxics, the report states,

“Chronic exposure to pesticides has been linked to cancer, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases, hormone disruption, developmental disorders and sterility.”

Although the pesticide industry argues that its products are vital for protecting crops and ensuring sufficient food supplies, Elver says, “It is a myth.”

The report argues:

“While scientific research confirms the adverse effects of pesticides, proving a definitive link between exposure and human diseases or conditions or harm to the ecosystem presents a considerable challenge. This challenge has been exacerbated by a systematic denial, fuelled by the pesticide and agro-industry, of the magnitude of the damage inflicted by these chemicals, and aggressive, unethical marketing tactics.”

Elver says:

“The power of the corporations over governments and over the scientific community is extremely important. If you want to deal with pesticides, you have to deal with the companies.”

The report recommends a move towards a global treaty to govern the use of pesticides and (like [many other official reports](#)) a shift to sustainable practice based on natural methods of suppressing pests and crop rotation and organically produced food.



Rachal Carson's book [Silent Spring](#) (1962) raised the red flag about the use of harmful synthetic pesticides, yet, despite the warnings, the agrochemical giants have ever since been [conning us with snake oil under the pretense of 'feeding the world'](#), while hiding behind bought science to mask their own ignorance or to cover up the harm they knowingly do. When you drench soil with proprietary synthetic chemicals, introduce company-patented genetically tampered crops or continuously monocrop as part of a corporate-controlled industrial farming system, you kill essential microbes, upset soil balance and end up feeding soil a limited ["doughnut diet"](#) of unhealthy inputs.

In their arrogance (and ignorance), these companies claim to know what they are doing and attempt to get the public and various agencies to bow before the altar of corporate 'science' and its [scientific priesthood](#).

Michael McCarthy, writer and naturalist, [says](#) that three generations of industrialised farming with a vast tide of poisons pouring over the land year after year after year, since the end of the second world war is the true price of pesticide-based agriculture, which society has for so long blithely accepted. Modern farming is in effect a principal source of global toxification and soil degradation. However, companies like Monsanto have no shame: they use tobacco tactics and science to try to confuse the issues and will even get their media and academic mouthpieces to ghost write 'independent' pieces to defend their products: they too have no shame, if the price is right, of course.

Chemical-intensive Green Revolution technology and ideology has effectively [uprooted indigenous/traditional agriculture](#) across the planet and has recast farming according to the needs global agribusiness and its supply chains. This has had devastating effects on regions, rural communities, diets, soils, health and water pollution. However, this financially lucrative venture for transnational corporations continues apace, spearheaded by the Gates Foundation in Africa and the World Bank's 'enabling the business of agriculture'.

This model of agriculture is poisoning life and the environment and undermining food security throughout the globe. Power is now increasingly concentrated in the hands of a handful of transnational agribusiness corporations which put profit and market control

ahead of food security, health and nutrition and biodiversity.

Due to their political influence and financial clout, these companies are inflicting [various forms of structural violence](#) on humanity, including the waging of chemical warfare on nature and people, while seeking to convince us that their model of agriculture – based on proprietary seeds and chemicals – is essential for feeding a burgeoning global population. They mouth platitudes about choice and democracy, while curtailing both as they infiltrate and subvert regulatory agencies and government machinery. And they seek to continually degrade and marginalise approaches to agriculture that are sustainable and which produce healthy food.

Instead of accepting their model is both a failure and destructive, what we see under the banner of ‘innovation’ is even stronger pesticides and the roll-out of next generation untested genetically engineered food and synthetic alternatives to food coming down the pipeline (with [all that entails](#) for health and the further undermining of food security).

While governments, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, trade agreements and regulatory agencies remain tethered to the interests of the powerful corporations that have come to define the nature of global food and agriculture, there are [alternatives](#) to this system and the discussion of issues surrounding food and agriculture are now appearing in the mainstream media with increasing frequency.

It took a long time to finally curtail the activities of big tobacco. Tackling big agribusiness (and the system of capitalism that allows it to prosper at one expense) and its entrenchment within the heart of governments and international institutions is urgent. Unfortunately, given the scale of the problem and what is at stake, time is not on our side.

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