

Lawsuits in the US, Against Syngenta: Weed-killing Chemical Paraquat Which Causes Parkinson's Disease?

By [U.S. Right to Know](#)

Global Research, September 28, 2021

[US Right to Know](#)

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Biotechnology and GMO](#), [Law and Justice](#)

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Multiple lawsuits are pending in the United States against Syngenta alleging the weedkilling chemical paraquat causes Parkinson's disease.

A notice of settlement was filed June 18, 2021 for several paraquat cases. [See this document](#).

But more than 100 lawsuits remain pending.

The lawsuits name Syngenta as well as Chevron Phillips Chemical Co. and Growmark Inc. as defendants. Chevron distributed and sold Gramoxone paraquat product in the United States in an agreement with a Syngenta predecessor called Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI), which introduced paraquat-based Gramoxone in 1962. Under a license agreement, Chevron had the right to to manufacture, use, and sell paraquat formulations in the U.S.

Lawyers around the United States are advertising for plaintiffs, seeking to draw in thousands of people who've been exposed to paraquat and now suffer from Parkinson's.

Here is a list of actions pending through Judicial Council Coordination Proceedings (JCCP) as of Aug. 2, 2021

- Harker v. Syngenta, et al. Case No. CGC-21-589755 (San Francisco Superior Court) (coordinated June 11, 2021)
- De La Vega v. Syngenta, et al. Case No. C21-01057. (Contra Costa Superior Court) (coordinated July 19, 2021)
- Louis Lombardo v. Syngenta et al., Alameda County Superior Court; Case No. RG21100757, filed on May 26, 2021 (coordinated July 19, 2021)
- Lonnie Owens et al. v. Syngenta et al., Contra Costa Superior Court; Case No. C21-01187, filed on June 4, 2021 (coordinated July 19, 2021)

- Borrelli v. Syngenta AG, et al. (Case No. MSC21-01217), filed June 24, 2021 in Contra Costa County Superior Court (coordinated July 23, 2021)
- Isaak v. Syngenta AG, et al., San Francisco Superior Court; Case No. CGC-21591254 (coordinated August 2, 2021)
- Rubino v. Syngenta, et al., Contra Costa County Superior Court Case No. C2101422 (coordinated August 2, 2021)
- Aguiar v. Syngenta, et al. Case No. C21-01373. (Contra Costa Superior Court) (coordinated August 2, 2021)

Multidistrict litigation

On April 7, 2021, the Fears Nachawati Texas-based law firm [filed a motion](#) with the U.S. Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation in Washington, D.C., asking that pending paraquat lawsuits be consolidated for pretrial proceedings in the Northern District of California, the same federal court where Roundup litigation was consolidated. The case with the judicial panel is MDL No. 3004. The panel hearing on the matter was May 27 and on June 7, the panel [approved](#) the formation of the paraquat multidistrict litigation, assigning it to Judge Nancy J. Rosenstengel in the Southern District of Illinois.

Additionally, a [class action lawsuit](#) was filed in federal court in Iowa on May 3. The suit seeks “equitable relief in the form of medical monitoring, including, but not limited to, the costs of diagnostic testing” for farmers and others exposed to paraquat who are allegedly at “increased risk” for Parkinson’s, according to the legal filing.

At least 86 lawsuits were pending within the MDL [as of September 10](#), 2021.

Science

Several scientific studies have linked paraquat to Parkinson’s, including a [large study of U.S. farmers](#) jointly overseen by multiple U.S. government agencies. Farmers use paraquat in the production of many crops, including corn, soy and cotton. The Agricultural Health Study (AHS) said it found that “exposure to agricultural pesticides may increase a person’s risk of developing Parkinson’s disease.” In 2011, AHS researchers reported that “participants who used paraquat or rotenone were twice as likely to develop Parkinson’s disease as people who didn’t use these chemicals.”

A more [recent paper](#) from AHS researchers stated that “Extensive literature suggests an association between general pesticide use and Parkinson’s disease (PD). However, with few exceptions, little is known about associations between specific pesticides and PD.”

Parkinson’s is an incurable progressive nervous system disorder that limits a person’s ability to control movement, causing tremors, loss of balance and eventually often leaving victims bedridden and/or bound to a wheelchair. The disease is not necessarily fatal but typically becomes severely debilitating.

[Dutch neurologist Bastiaan Bloem](#), who recently authored a book about Parkinson’s, blames widespread exposure to herbicides such as paraquat, along with other toxic chemicals used in agriculture and manufacturing, for the spread of the disease.

Acutely Toxic

Along with fears about links between paraquat and Parkinson's, paraquat is also known to be an extremely acutely toxic chemical that can quickly kill people who ingest very small amounts. In Europe, the sale of paraquat has been banned since 2007, but in the United States the pesticide is sold as a "Restricted Use Pesticide" due to ["acute toxicity."](#)

As part of discovery in the Parkinson's litigation, lawyers have obtained internal records from Syngenta and its predecessor corporate entities dating back to the 1960s. Many of these documents are sealed, but some have started to come to light.

Those unsealed discovery documents, which include copies of letters, minutes of meetings, study summaries, and emails, are being made available on this page.

Most of the documents unsealed to date deal with corporate discussions about how to keep paraquat herbicides on the market despite its deadliness, through measures designed to reduce accidental poisonings. Specifically, many of the documents detail an internal corporate struggle over the addition of an emetic, a vomit-inducing agent, to paraquat products. Today, all Syngenta paraquat-containing products include an emetic called "PP796." Liquid paraquat-containing formulations from Syngenta also include a stenching agent to produce a foul odor, and a blue dye to differentiate the dark-colored herbicide from tea or cola or other beverages.

EPA Review

Paraquat recently underwent the EPA's registration review process, and on August 2, 2021 the agency said paraquat would remain on the market with new safety measures aimed at reducing farmworker exposures. That followed the Oct. 23, 2020 release of a [proposed interim decision \(PID\) for paraquat.](#) The interim decision proposed mitigation measures to reduce human health and ecological risks identified in the agency's 2019 draft [human health](#) and [ecological risk](#) assessments.

The EPA had indicated it would likely ban most aerial spraying of paraquat, but after industry lobbying efforts, the agency said it would allow such use with restrictions around residential areas.

The EPA said that through collaboration with the [National Toxicology Program at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences](#), the agency completed a "thorough review" of the scientific information on paraquat and Parkinson's Disease and concluded that the weight of evidence was insufficient to link paraquat to Parkinson's disease. The agency published this ["Systematic Review of the Literature to Evaluate the Relationship between Paraquat Dichloride Exposure and Parkinson's Disease."](#)

USRTK will add documents to this page as they become available.

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