

Out in the Open: Monsanto's Involvement in the Retraction of the Séralini Paper

By [Chemical Concern](#)

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Claire Robinson reports that internal Monsanto documents released by attorneys leading US cancer litigation show that Monsanto attempted to suppress a [study](#) showing adverse effects of Roundup herbicide. The full report may be read [here](#).

She writes:

“The study, led by **Prof GE Séralini**, showed that very low doses of Monsanto’s Roundup herbicide had toxic effects on rats over a long-term period, including serious liver and kidney damage. Additional observations of increased tumour rates in treated rats would need to be confirmed in a larger-scale carcinogenicity study”.

[The New York Times](#) has published some of the emails mentioned by Claire. In the documents released by the American law firm, Monsanto scientist **David Saltmiras** [admitted](#) orchestrating a “third party expert” campaign in which scientists who were apparently independent of Monsanto would bombard the editor-in-chief of the journal Food and Chemical Toxicology (FCT), A. Wallace Hayes, with letters demanding that he retract the study. In one document, Saltmiras reviews his own achievements within the company, successfully facilitating numerous third party expert letters to the editor which were subsequently published, alleging numerous significant deficiencies, poor study design, biased reporting and selective statistics employed by Séralini. Another Monsanto employee, **Eric Sachs**, [writes](#) in an email about his efforts to galvanize scientists in the letter-writing campaign.

Sachs refers to **Bruce Chassy**, a scientist who runs the pro-GMO Academics Review website (and has [‘form’](#)).

Sachs writes:

“I talked to Bruce Chassy and he will send his letter to **Wally Hayes** directly and notify other scientists that have sent letters to do the same. He understands the urgency... I remain adamant that Monsanto must not be put in the position of providing the critical analysis that leads the editors to retract the paper.”

Chassy was the first signatory of a petition demanding the retraction of the Séralini study and the co-author of a Forbes article [accusing](#) Séralini of fraud. In neither document does Chassy declare any link with Monsanto. But in 2016 he was [reported](#) to have taken over

\$57,000 over less than two years from Monsanto to travel, write and speak about GMOs.

The disclosed documents show that the editor of Food and Chemical Toxicology, A. Wallace Hayes, entered into a consulting [agreement](#) with Monsanto in the period just before Hayes's involvement in the retraction of the Séralini study.

Clearly there was a conflict of interest between Hayes' role as a consultant for Monsanto and his role as editor for a journal that retracted a study determining that glyphosate has toxic effects. The study was published on 19 September 2012; the consulting agreement between Hayes and Monsanto was dated 21 August 2012 and Hayes is contracted to provide his services beginning 7 September 2012.

A Monsanto internal email [confirms](#) the company's intimate relationship with Hayes. Saltmiras writes about the recently published Séralini study:

"Wally Hayes, now FCT Editor in Chief for Vision and Strategy, sent me a courtesy email early this morning. Hopefully the two of us will have a follow up discussion soon to touch on whether FCT Vision and Strategy were front and center for this one passing through the peer review process."

Monsanto got its way, though the paper was subsequently [republished](#) by another journal with higher principles - and, presumably, with an editorial board that wasn't under contract with Monsanto.

Some regulatory bodies have backed Monsanto rather than the public interest. In fact, the EU is considering dispensing with the short [90-day animal feeding studies](#) currently required under European GMO legislation.

Now that Monsanto's involvement in the retraction of the Séralini paper is out in the open, FCT and Hayes should issue a formal apology to Prof Séralini and his team. FCT cannot and should not reinstate the paper because it has been published by another journal. But it needs to draw a line under this episode, admit that it handled it badly, and declare its support for scientific independence and objectivity.

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