

**Syngenta:
Blaming
Human
Fear,
Producing
Fake News**

PR Watch *Posted by Rebekah Wilce*

Syngenta also has a share in the neonic market. Its product, thiamethoxam, is worth \$627 million. In an attempt to deemphasize the possible role of pesticides in bee declines, the company's PR materials go so far as to blame the problem in part on human fear. A "Plight of the Bees" page on its website explains, "Many people are afraid of bees, wasps, hornets, and many other flying insects. This fear converts, unfortunately, into a major health threat to bees, as too many people simply kill them if they fly into a home or too near to people as they eat, sleep, talk or drink. The number of bees killed by humans each year dwarfs the number of bees killed by any of its other predators." Syngenta has also produced staged interviews masquerading as news distributed via YouTube and its website, in which company officials deny and spin the science. The report cites one video in which chief operating officer John Atkins "assures a seemingly sincere actor-journalist, that 'we are completely convinced ... that bee declines have nothing to do with this class of chemistry [neonics]' and 'millions of hectares have been tested to verify that these products are safe to bee populations. The combination of their benefits and the lack of impact on the bee populations is why they are so important worldwide.'"

**Monsanto:
Buying
Credibility
... and a
Bee
Research
Firm**

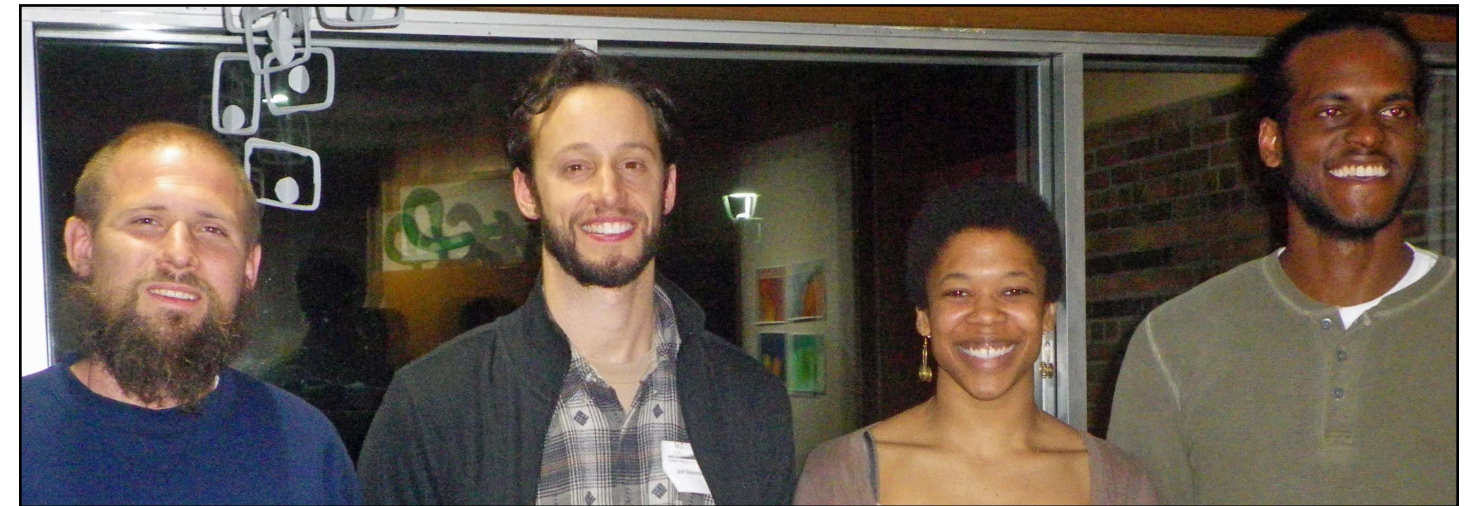
While Monsanto does not directly manufacture any neonicotinoids, it does sell seeds pre-treated with the insecticides. In the United States, about 90 percent of corn, for example, is treated with neonicotinoids, according to *Mother Jones*. Monsanto's overall sales of "Seeds and Genomics" were \$9.8 billion in 2012. Monsanto announced the formation of a Honey Bee Advisory Council consisting of Monsanto executives as well as scientists and beekeepers from around the country in June 2013. The FOE report suggests that Monsanto "may be using the council's scientific credibility to emphasize bee threats other than pesticides" because a company press release says that, "based largely on HBAC's counsel, it has focused its bee health research efforts on finding a way to control the varroa mite ... " Monsanto bought Beeologics, a \$113 million bee research firm, in what the FOE report describes as a "fox-buys-henhouse" situation in September 2011. Beeologics had developed an antiviral product that it indicated has the potential to ease the bee crisis. Simon writes that the acquisition and attendant PR effort "has presented the company as a conscientious and effective leader in addressing the bee crisis.

**"Be Aware
of the
Tobacco-
Style
Tactics
Pesticide
Companies
are
Using"**

In an appeal to reporters and the media, the "Follow the Honey" report urges awareness of these tobacco-style tactics being used to "deflect blame from pesticides." And it asks how long the public will allow these tactics to "delay meaningful action in protecting these small but essential pollinators." Europe has implemented a continent-wide two-year suspension on the use of the three most-used neonicotinoids – imidacloprid, clothianidin and thiamethoxam. Meanwhile, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued a joint report in May 2013 concluding in part that "pesticide exposure to pollinators continues to be an area of research and concern, particularly the systemic pesticides such as neonicotinoids." But although the EPA is currently required to review the use of neonicotinoids as pesticides, the review is not scheduled to be completed until at least 2018. And the EPA and USDA have stated that a U.S. neonicotinoid ban is unnecessary. FOE asks supporters to call on the EPA and Congress to act now to restrict neonicotinoids.

John Kinsman Beginning Farmer Food Sovereignty Award

MARCH 15, 2014, BARABOO, WISCONSIN



THE 2014 JOHN KINSMAN BEGINNING FARMER FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AWARD

On left: Will Pool, Jed Schenker, Maya Odum and Blain Snipstal

**These young farmers are so inspiring!
They epitomize the values of Food Sovereignty.
John Kinsman would have been so proud!**

Blain Snipstal is a farmer and an activist. He is part of the International Youth Articulation of La Via Campesina, and the South Eastern-American Farmers Organic Network, and the Seed Keepers Collective, and is currently working with WhyHunger on a Community Learning Project partnership on seed sovereignty. *(For more on Blain Snipstal see pg.12 & 13)*

Will Pool, Jed Schenker and Maya Odum are from Loud Grade Produce Squad based in Chicago, Illinois. Their first year was exhilarating and meaningful; they transformed an unused urban space into a farm, nourishing the surrounding community. They are now in our fifth year and the farm has expanded to include over 75 raised beds, many of which are used to grow food by community residents. They have built a greenhouse, a chicken coop, an apiary, rainwater collections systems, and an expansive composting program. Their rooftop farm received the *2011 Governor's Hometown Award* for its positive impact on the community. The rooftop has become a neighborhood destination, featured in the 2012 Open House Chicago program, a self-guided architectural tour of some of Chicago's most innovative uses of space. More than 30 different schools, youth groups, community centers and programs have spent time on the rooftop learning about urban agriculture including Greencorps, Americorps, and Walter Payton High School.

