

# Monsanto pleads guilty to using banned pesticide on research crop

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A picture taken on May 24, 2016 in Lillo near Antwerp shows the Monsanto logo on a building at the firm Manufacturing Site and Operations Center.

Biotech giant Monsanto on Thursday agreed to plead guilty to illegally using a banned and highly toxic pesticide on research crops at one of its

facilities on the Hawaiian island of Maui and to pay \$10 million in fines.

The company admitted in [court documents](#) filed in US District Court in Honolulu that it sprayed the pesticide known as Penncap-M on corn seed and other crops at its Valley Farm facility in 2014, even though it knew the chemical had been banned by the Environmental Protection Agency the year before.

"The illegal conduct in this case posed a threat to the environment, surrounding communities and Monsanto workers," said Nick Hanna, the United States Attorney for the Central District of California, whose office handled the case. "Federal laws and regulations impose a clear duty on every user of regulated and dangerous chemicals to ensure the products are safely stored, transported and used."

The case against Monsanto was brought as the agriculture giant faced a slew of lawsuits arguing that its Roundup weed killer causes cancer.

Federal prosecutors had initially sought to file felony charges against the company for illegally spraying Penncap-M, a nerve agent. But they reportedly agreed to let the company plead to a lesser misdemeanor offense after Monsanto's lawyers intervened at the highest levels of the Department of Justice.

In its [guilty plea](#), Monsanto admitted that after the 2014 spraying, it told employees to enter the sprayed fields a week later even though it knew the workers should have been kept from entering the area for 31 days.

The plea calls for Monsanto to pay a \$6 million criminal fine and \$4 million in community service payments to Hawaiian government entities.

Hanna's office said the government agreed to dismiss felony charges in two years if Monsanto abides by the plea agreement.

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