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## ***German pesticides poison Argentina***

Glyphosate continues to be sprayed on Argentina's gigantic soybean plantations. Companies like Bayer and BASF make millions from their pesticides. The population and the environment pay the bill



Norma Herrera has done everything she can to make herbicides like glyphosate disappear from Argentina. But it's like fighting with windmills. "Glyphosate is banned worldwide, but here they are still using it," he says. Many neighbors have died in recent years, and even today there are people who die of cancer. What the soybean companies are doing here is nothing more than ecocide," he says.



Fumigation of a soybean plantation in Entre Ríos, Argentina.

Herrera is part of the "Mothers of Ituzaingó", who joined 20 years ago, when suddenly there were three cases of leukemia in that neighborhood of Córdoba, the second largest city in Argentina. Among them was also Norma's daughter. A short distance from his home, large soybean plantations were sprayed with the herbicide from airplanes. Toxic cocktail

"When we started protesting, 20 years ago, we were insulted; they said we were just a couple of crazy mothers, whose detergent had gone to their heads. But when the drinking water was analyzed here, we knew that we had been poisoned: they found a cocktail of glyphosate, heavy metals, arsenic and lead," he says.

Almost no one was spared in Ituzaingó. Practically in every family there is a case of leukemia, diseases of the thyroid, kidneys, neurodermitis or pregnancy loss. Norma Herrera and the other mothers managed, at least, to have pesticide spraying judicially prohibited less than 2.5 kilometers away from inhabited areas.

Two men were even imprisoned, for spraying glyphosate on the inhabitants of the neighborhood A Pyrrhic victory, because every year 200 million liters of herbicides and insecticides go to the soybean fields. Argentina is the country where glyphosate is used the most per capita.

### *The Atlas of Pesticides*

Germany, as a large producer of carne, benefits from all this because the animals are fed with feed based on Argentine soybeans. "Every farmer who buys soybeans here for his pigs causes irreparable damage. The more soybeans they buy in Germany, the more they

produce here. But the fault lies above all with governments and multinationals, they are only interested in making money," says Norma Herrera.



The Mothers of Ituzaingó protest against the use of pesticides in Argentina. Biologist Raúl Montenegro, who created the FUNAM nature defense foundation in Córdoba 40 years ago, is one of Argentina's best-known environmentalists and was awarded the Alternative Nobel Prize in 2004. He [recommends reading the 2022 Atlas of Pesticides](#), research that yields devastating results: more pesticides were used globally than ever before; the number of people affected annually by poisoning has risen to 385 billion.

Inka Dewitz is a specialist in international food policy at the Heirich Böll Foundation, which with other institutions published this atlas. It states that "toxic pesticides that are not allowed in the European Union, can still be exported."

#### *A great business*

The biggest beneficiaries are chemical companies such as Bayer and BASF, which together with the Chinese group Syngenta and the American Corteva, dominate about 70 percent of the world market. A lucrative business. In 2020, Bayer's sales in this segment were close to €9.8 billion, and BASF's sales amounted to about €5.5 billion.

"Bayer and BASF abide by national laws, so for them, everything is in order. But in many countries the regulations are much weaker than in the EU. And it is exported where it is most likely to be authorized. And that happens especially in Latin American countries," says Dewitz.

*Oliver Pieper*

*Edited by [María Piedad Ossaba](#)*

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