

Pesticides on Our Food: Will the Real Public Enemy No. 1 Please Stand Up?

by [Katherine Paul](#)

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[Source](#)

"I'd say Roundup is our public enemy number one probably, but that's one of 260 chemicals that are now prevalent in our food system. So, we have completely chemicalized the human experience and the planet itself, and so the level of toxicity has superseded the planet's capacity for life." – Dr. Zach Bush, October 14, 2019, [interview](#) published in Salon.

Two important articles about pesticides, food and health were published this week.

One highlights the insanity of allowing the unleashing of [billions of pounds](#) of [glyphosate](#) into our environment and food systems every year.

The other raises this question: Who's the real Public Enemy No. 1?

Is it [Monsanto](#) (now owned by Bayer)?

Or is it the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) which defends the use of [Roundup weedkiller](#) and other toxic chemicals on our food?

In an [interview](#) with Salon, Dr. Zach Bush outlines the, literally, gut-wrenching impact of Monsanto's Roundup on human

health.

And in an [article](#) by Carey Gillam, Gillam reveals the extent to which our food is contaminated by not just Roundup, but also by a host of other dangerous toxins, including [chlorpyrifos](#) and DDT.

Gillam also reveals the lengths to which the FDA goes to protect the agri-chemical industry by insisting that all these chemicals on our food are nothing to worry about.

All roads lead to Monsanto's weedkiller

Dr. Zach Bush used to research and develop chemotherapy treatments. But he told Salon that at some point he realized he was “missing the point” because he was doing nothing to prevent cancer.

So Bush started to focus on nutrition. That led him down the path toward chemical agriculture, its impact on the soil, and the relationship between soil health and human health.

Bush told Salon:

“So, I was studying soil, found some carbon molecules made by bacteria and fungi in soil, and therefore, in our gut, as well, that had medicinal qualities similar to the chemotherapy [drugs] I used to make. And that was the sudden “Aha!” moment that closed the question of, “How come, when we’re missing some bacteria, we get cancer?”

Eventually, all roads led Bush to glyphosate.

According to Bush, glyphosate acts as an antibiotic in the soil, and in the human gut. We think that our exposure to glyphosate is limited to the residue that remains on our foods. But glyphosate is actually taken up by the plants that become our food. Bush says:

. . . it's not something you can wash off. It's actually in

the flesh of the tomato, corn, soybean, whatever it hits. And so, it's integrated in that water structure, and as it hits your gut microbiome [it] acts as an antibiotic to kill the microbial diversity in your intestines. We now know [this] is the beginning of chronic disease, many chronic diseases are now being mapped back to injuries in the microbiome. And so, as we wipe out the bacteria and fungi with this broad spectrum antibiotic in our food, we are killing the health of our animals, the livestock we consume, beef, poultry, pork, and everything else.

Bush blames today's epidemic of chronic disease on the collapse of the microbiome—a condition commonly referred to as “leaky gut,” and for which consumers are now bombarded with [remedies](#) they can buy to solve the problem.

Bush thinks we should focus instead on preventing the problem. That means getting rid of pesticides, and going back to farming using methods that restore biodiversity and soil health.

FDA: so many pesticides, so little concern

Roundup is “probably public enemy no. 1,” according to Bush, but it's only one of 260 chemicals now prevalent in our food system.

And that brings us to the [article](#) Carey Gillam wrote this week, on the FDA's latest [analysis](#) of pesticide residues in the U.S. food system.

According to Gillam's account, “pesticides were found in 84 percent of domestic samples of fruits, and 53 percent of vegetables, as well as 42 percent of grains and 73 percent of food samples simply listed as ‘other.’ The samples were drawn from around the country, including from California, Texas, Kansas, New York and Wisconsin.”

In other words, good luck finding any non-organic fruits,

veggies or grains that aren't contaminated with pesticides.

The volume of pesticide residues on our food is staggering. But it's not even the worst news. The worst news is that the FDA found significant traces of some of the worst chemicals for human health. The list includes DDT, [banned](#) more than 40 years ago for causing cancer, infertility and nervous system damage, and chlorpyrifos, banned (finally) in the U.S., only to have the Trump administration [overturn the ban](#).

Does any of this concern the FDA? Not really, according to Gillam, who writes:

The regulators echo the words of [Monsanto](#) executives and others in the chemical industry by insisting that pesticide residues pose no threat to human health as long as the levels of each type of residue falls under a "tolerance" level set by the EPA.

In fact, the FDA—under increasing pressure from agribusiness and agrichemical industry lobbyists—continues to *raise* the allowed "legal" limits for pesticides on food. This despite the fact that no test exists that can prove without a doubt that any of these chemicals are "safe," at any level, according to Andre Leu, author of "[The Myth of Safe Pesticides](#)." Leu makes that same article in another of his books, "[Poisoning Our Children](#)."

Meanwhile, as Gillam notes, the \$215-billion agrichemical industry continues to ignore the evidence and defend its right to poison our food. Gillam reports that this month, a group of three researchers with "long-standing close ties to the companies that sell agricultural pesticides" released a [report](#) "seeking to soothe consumer worries and discount the scientific research." Despite mountains of evidence to the contrary, the report claims that there's "no direct scientific or medical evidence indicating that typical exposure of consumers to pesticide residues poses any health risk."

That leaves consumers to try to minimize their risk by choosing [certified organic](#) whenever possible, and by relentlessly hounding our lawmakers to ban chemicals like glyphosate ([sign here](#)) and chlorpyrifos ([sign here](#)).

Katherine Paul is associate director of the [Organic Consumers Association \(OCA\)](#). To keep up with OCA news and alerts, [sign up for our newsletter](#).