Monsanto Awarded $1B in Patent Case vs. DuPont

The Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — A jury on Tuesday awarded Monsanto $1 billion in a patent-infringement trial against rival DuPont.

The trial in U.S. district court in St. Louis centered on whether DuPont infringed on Monsanto's patent for developing genetically modified soybean seeds that can withstand the weed killer Roundup.

The jury determined that a subsidiary of The DuPont Co., which is based in Wilmington, Del., willfully violated St. Louis-based Monsanto Co.'s patent on its so-called Roundup Ready technology.

DuPont said it plans to appeal the verdict and expects it to be overturned.

The trial was the latest in an ongoing legal battle over how much freedom Monsanto's competitors have to develop crops containing their own biotech traits using the Roundup Ready gene.

The gene makes crops resistant to Monsanto's Roundup herbicide, making it cheaper and easier for farmers to control weeds because they can spray the herbicide without hurting their crop. It has become the industry standard since Monsanto introduced it in 1996.

Monsanto sued DuPont in 2009 claiming it was illegal for DuPont to use its technology without authorization in developing a line of soybean seeds called Optimum GAT, which DuPont later abandoned.

DuPont said it believes Monsanto's patent is invalid and unenforceable. It also said the $1 billion in damages is unjustified because its DuPont Pioneer seed division has never sold a single Optimum GAT seed and doesn't plan to in the future.

DuPont also noted that it has an antitrust and patent-misuse case pending against Monsanto.

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