

Monsanto's next horizon: Big Data

You probably know Monsanto as the world's leading producer of genetically engineered seeds—a global agribusiness giant whose critics accuse it of everything from boosting our reliance on pesticides to [driving Indian farmers to suicide](#).

But that's actually just the latest in a long series of evolving corporate identities. When the company was founded in 1901 by a St. Louis pharmacist, its initial product was artificial sweetener. Over the next few decades Monsanto expanded into industrial chemicals, releasing its first agricultural herbicide, 2,4-D, in 1945. In the '50s it produced laundry detergent, the infamous insecticide DDT, and chemical components for nuclear bombs. In the '60s it churned out Agent Orange for the Vietnam War. In the '70s it became one of the largest producers of LED lights.

It was around this time that Robb Fraley, now Monsanto's chief technology officer, joined the company as a mid-level biotechnology scientist. Back then, he recalls, the company had its hand in oil wells, plastics, carpets—you name it. It wasn't until the early '80s that Monsanto began to shift its focus to biotechnology, conducting the first US field trials of bioengineered plants in 1987. By the end of the '90s, it was a full-fledged biotech company. And over the last 10 years, after a series of seed company acquisitions, it has become the company we all know and love—or hate—today.

Now, there's a new evolution on the horizon: "I could easily see us in the next five or 10 years being an information technology company," says Fraley.

That's right: Monsanto is making a big move into big data. At stake is an opportunity to adapt to climate change by using computer science alongside the controversial genetic science that has been the company's signature for a generation.

Read the full, original article: [Monsanto Is Using Big Data to Take Over the World](#)