

Viewpoint: Former US journalist Carey Gillam should stay out of Europe's glyphosate debate

As the glyphosate lobbying process intensifies, [American carpetbaggers](#) are showing up and showing off quite frequently in Brussels. Carey Gillam is one of many environmental activists and lobbyists coming to the EU to capitalise on the softer hazard-based, precaution-primed policy process to get quick regulatory wins in Brussels they can then export to Washington.

Twice in two weeks, Green Party Members of the European Parliament flew this American anti-Monsanto lobbyist to Brussels to advise them about how to attack Monsanto and ban glyphosate. Given that European taxpayers are funding the costs for this activist to come to Brussels to lobby the European Union, perhaps we should look closely and ask: Who is Carey Gillam?

Journalist or lobbyist?

Gillam says on her [website](#) she is an investigative journalist. During a revealing [presentation](#) last week at a press conference in Brussels organised by several Green Party members, Bart Staes and Michèle Rivasi, Carey again introduced herself as a journalist first and then as a “researcher” for US Right to Know (USRTK is an activist pressure group [funded](#) by the organic food industry lobby).

Gillam was indeed a journalist from 1998 until 2015 for Reuters, who, after repeatedly attacking Monsanto in her articles, was pushed out from the news organisation. As any good conspiracy theorist would maintain, Gillam believes that Monsanto got to Reuters and was responsible for the sudden end to her journalism career. See an article that looks into this period.

Now losing one's job is an emotional event, and from my own experience I can understand if Gillam were to feel a bit of obsessive scorn (especially if she believes she was victimised by a company she felt had no moral authority). But does that justify her compulsive rage against Monsanto that the US, and now Brussels, is witnessing?

The USRTK spotted the opportunity and directly employed Gillam to lead their Monsanto witch-hunt. As she channels her hatred into research on anything negative about glyphosate; as she tirelessly pours over and cherry picks from thousands of pages of Monsanto documents leaked from the courts; as she ruthlessly attacks the reputations of respected plant biologists who disagree with her dogma; as she churns out an endless array of pro-organic, anti-GMO articles and blogs (some quite remarkably biased and [manipulative](#)) ... Gillam's relentless energy and anger has infected and rallied the anti-Monsanto zealots looking for a champion to exploit.

But this is not journalism nor research. [USRTK](#) is an activist non-profit lobbying group attempting to influence the food debate. Like our very own Corporate Europe Observatory, USRTK lobbies to stop industry lobbying, but has a hard time admitting that they are lobbying for the organic industry and its chief Sugar Daddy, the Organic Consumer Association. Gillam's work is to advance the interest of the organic lobby – by any standard definition, she is thus a lobbyist (although I'm sure she finds that word almost as offensive as the word "Monsanto").

An influential influencer?

[carey as rachel](#)

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Really now. We've been looking for a new Rachel Carson.

Gillam has been [likened](#) to a modern-day Rachel Carson, which she coyly promoted on her twitter page. She does keep very good company. For example:

- Gillam can be seen moving freely among the anti-glyphosate activist scientists. The chair of the IARC glyphosate monograph working group, Aaron Blair, noted in his deposition ([page 219-220](#)) that Carey would often consult him and Christopher Portier (architect of the "Great IARC Scientific Swindle").
- Gillam is working directly with the legal pack of wolves suing Monsanto, and when they sequester documents, Carey quickly rifles through them for gotcha lines she can publish, and then releases them on a near daily basis (sometimes in breach of court discretionary rules) on the USRTK website.
- She is obviously close to the IARC communications machine, helping to push the agency forward in its battle to maintain some shred of credibility against the criticisms and howls from the scientific community. See in the image below how Carey was able to tweet about an IARC press release four hours before the agency published their communication. A special relationship?

clear food

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Courtesy of Clear-Food on twitter. Carey tweets on IARC reaction four hours too soon. Collusion?

Clearly Gillam is seen by the range of actors in the organic food industry lobby as a key player. For that reason, the European Green Party is again using taxpayer money to fly this carpetbagger from the US to Brussels to help people like MEP Bart Staes put a few more nails in the coffin of the glyphosate renewal dossier and further trash industry's reputation.

Breaking the law?

As a Belgian citizen (and a European taxpayer), I asked my MEP, Bart Staes, about details of the public funding of Gillam's repeated trips to Brussels (Gillam was crowing on twitter that the "European taxpayers on the hook for my ticket"). The way I saw it, this was an American activist paid by US organic lobbying organisations, being funded to come to Brussels to lobby a foreign government. I believe there are protocols in the European Parliament about if and how lobbyists should be paid.



Wait, I'm an EU taxpayer! ... Shit!

We should also not forget that the European Green Party has its own voluntary initiative of full disclosure of any lobbyist contacts. I couldn't find this disclosure report for her first visit (she came with one of the lawyers suing Monsanto). I have written MEP Staes for more details, but two weeks on, he has declined to reply – I suspect he is scrambling to cover his tracks.

More curious is the question of whether Gillam's lobbying trips to Brussels are not breaking the laws in the US governing how non-profits are allowed to act. American 501c3 tax exempt organisations like USRTK are not normally allowed to lobby foreign governments (USRTK could risk losing their

tax exempt status). Carey would have to have reported this before her trips, explaining the nature of her activities abroad as a representative of an American non-profit. Now I am not an American lawyer (perhaps one should follow this up), but under the FARA law, it seems indeed that a foreign government is paying Gillam with the expectation that she will influence public policy. Consequences of violating the reporting requirements could be severe. As Gillam is a stickler for transparency and proper conduct, I'm sure all of the proper requirements have been fulfilled. But wouldn't it be a howler if she had forgotten and USRTK loses its tax exempt status. I for one will be shedding tears of joy!

If Gillam attempts to promote her anti-Monsanto book while here, she will likely be breaking more laws. Damn, I was hoping to get a signed copy!

All this just to bash a company?

Why are my tax-euros paying for this nonsense (twice for Christ's sake!)?

The claims Gillam is making about glyphosate and Monsanto are outrageous, cherry-picked and obsessively amplified given the reality. For example, on ghost writing, the BfR produced a 4000+ page report on glyphosate. Often there are texts pasted in to serve as "placemats" for the scientists to rework and reference at a later time. That the authors forgot to manage four paragraphs (over 4000 bloody pages) is not a reason to scrap the entire EU risk assessment process (unless that was their motive all along and this whole glyphosate melodrama is just a tool in the process of undermining EU regulatory science).

At the end of the day, relentless obsession from characters like Carey Gillam is blowing the entire glyphosate regulatory process into the realm of the absurd. I really can't bear to share my observations with farmers any more when they contact me for news on whether they can use the herbicide of the century next year.

Despite all of the torches and pitchforks, as I wrote in my last [blog](#), I keep trying to remind myself that Monsanto is just a mid-sized research-based company, glyphosate is a useful substance with low toxicity that farmers in the EU can use to control weeds and improve soil health. There is no Roundup-Ready GE seeds in Europe (although that is precisely why American carpetbaggers like Carey keep coming over). The activities of this company have not always been appropriate, but compared to other company mis-steps in the past, I think the manufactured outrage is just a tad too excessive. This is not the end of the world, the destruction of science and media nor the demise of public health.

Gillam needs to get over her rage from 2015 ... but she has surrounded herself with a band of opportunistic zealots happy enough to exploit that.

David Zaruk—the Risk-Monger—has been an EU risk and science communications specialist since 2000, active in EU policy events from REACH and SCALE to the Pesticides Directive. Follow him on twitter [@zaruk](#)

This article was originally published on [The Risk-Monger](#) as [Carey Gillam: A Rachel Carson for our Time?](#) and has been republished here with permission.