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**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

JOSEPH NELSON,

Plaintiff,

v.

SYNGENTA AG; SYNGENTA CROP  
PROTECTION, LLC; CHEVRON U.S.A. INC.;  
and DOES 1 through 60 inclusive,

Defendants.

**Civil Action No.: 3:21-cv-03670**

**COMPLAINT FOR DAMAGES**

**DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**

Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON (hereinafter referred to as “Plaintiff”), by and through counsel MOTLEY RICE, LLC, alleges upon information and belief and complains of Defendants Syngenta AG (“SAG”) and Syngenta Crop Protection, LLC (“SCPLLC”) (together with their predecessors-in-interest, referred to collectively as the “Syngenta Defendants”); Chevron U.S.A. Inc. (together with its predecessors-in-interest, referred to collectively as the “Chevron Defendants”); and Does One through Sixty, and states:

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE**

1. Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON suffers from Parkinson’s disease caused by his exposure to the herbicide Paraquat.

2. Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON is a Minnesota resident.

1            3. Defendants are companies that since 1964 have manufactured, distributed, licensed,  
2 marketed, and sold Paraquat for use in the United States, including California.

3            4. Plaintiff brings this action to recover damages for personal injuries resulting from  
4 exposure to Paraquat manufactured, distributed, and sold by Defendants.

5            5. Defendants’ tortious conduct, including their negligent acts and omissions in the  
6 research, testing, design, manufacture, marketing, and sale of Paraquat, caused Plaintiff’s injuries.  
7 At all relevant times, Defendants knew, or in the exercise of reasonable care should have known,  
8 that Paraquat was a highly toxic substance that can cause severe neurological injuries and  
9 impairment, and should have taken steps in their research, manufacture, and sale of Paraquat to  
10 ensure that people would not be harmed by foreseeable uses of Paraquat.

**JURISDICTION**

11  
12            6. This Court has jurisdiction over Defendants and this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §  
13 1332 because there is complete diversity of citizenship between Plaintiff and each Defendant.  
14 Indeed, Plaintiff is a resident of Minnesota; SPLLC is a Delaware limited liability company with  
15 its principal place of business in Greensboro, North Carolina (SPLLC is a wholly-owned  
16 subsidiary of Defendant SAG); SAG is a foreign corporation with its principal place of business in  
17 Basel, Switzerland; and Chevron U.S.A., Inc. is a Pennsylvania corporation with its principal  
18 place of business in San Ramon in Contra Costa County, California. Defendants are all either  
19 incorporated and/or have their principal place of business outside of the state in which the Plaintiff  
20 resides.

21            7. The amount in controversy between Plaintiff and Defendants exceeds \$75,000,  
22 exclusive of interest and cost.

**VENUE**

23  
24            8. Venue is proper within the Northern District of California pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §  
25 1391 in that Defendants conduct business here and are subject to personal jurisdiction in this  
26 district. Furthermore, Defendants sell, market, and/or distribute Paraquat within the Northern  
27 District of California. Also, a substantial part of the acts and/or omissions giving rise to these  
28 claims occurred within this District. Chevron U.S.A., Inc. is a corporation organized under the

1 laws of the State of Pennsylvania, with its headquarters and principal place of business in San  
2 Ramon in Contra Costa County, California.

3 9. This Court has personal jurisdiction over each of the Defendants in this diversity  
4 case because a state court of California would have such jurisdiction, in that:

5 a. Over a period of two (Chevron) to six (Syngenta) decades, each Defendant  
6 and/or its predecessor(s), together with those with whom they were acting in concert,  
7 manufactured Paraquat for use as an active ingredient in Paraquat products, distributed  
8 Paraquat to formulators of Paraquat products, formulated Paraquat products, marketed  
9 Paraquat products to the California agricultural community, and/or distributed Paraquat  
10 products, intending that such products regularly would be, and knowing they regularly  
11 were, sold and used in the State of California;

12 b. Plaintiff's claims against each Defendant arise out of these contacts between the  
13 Defendant and/or its predecessor(s), together with those with whom they were acting in  
14 concert, with the State of California; and

15 c. These contacts between each Defendant and/or its predecessors, together with  
16 those with whom they were acting in concert, and the State of California, were so regular,  
17 frequent, and sustained as to provide fair warning that it might be hauled into court there,  
18 such that requiring it to defend this action in the State of California does not offend  
19 traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.

20 **INTRADISTRICT ASSIGNMENT**

21 10. This action arises from the actions of Defendants – and, in particular, the actions of  
22 Defendant Chevron U.S.A., Inc. Defendant Chevron U.S.A., Inc. is a Pennsylvania corporation  
23 with its principal place of business in San Ramon in Contra Costa County, California. Pursuant to  
24 Local Rule 3-2(c), this claim may be assigned to either the San Francisco Division or the Oakland  
25 Division.

26 **PARTIES**

27 11. The true names or capacities whether individual, corporate, governmental or  
28 associate, of the defendants named herein as Doe are unknown to Plaintiff who therefore sues said

1 defendants by such fictitious names. Plaintiff prays leave to amend this Complaint to show their  
2 true names and capacities and/or bases for liability when the same have been finally determined.

3 12. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and upon such information and belief alleges,  
4 that each of the defendants designated herein as Doe is strictly, negligently, or otherwise legally  
5 responsible in some manner for the events and happenings herein referred to, and negligently or  
6 otherwise caused injury and damages proximately thereby to Plaintiff as is hereinafter alleged.

7 13. At all times herein mentioned each and every of the Defendants was the agent,  
8 servant, employee, joint venturer, alter ego, successor-in-interest, and predecessor-in-interest of  
9 each of the other, and each was acting within the course and scope of their agency, service, joint  
10 venture, alter ego relationship, employment, and corporate interrelationship.

11 14. U.K. manufacturer Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd. a/k/a Imperial Chemical  
12 Industries PLC (“ICI”) first introduced Paraquat to world markets in or about 1962 under the  
13 brand name GRAMOXONE®.

14 15. In or about 1971, ICI created or acquired a wholly owned U.S. subsidiary  
15 organized under the laws of the State of Delaware, which was ultimately known as ICI Americas  
16 Inc. (“ICI Americas”).

17 16. Chevron Chemical Company was a corporation organized under the laws of the  
18 State of Delaware.

19 17. Pursuant to distribution and licensing agreements with ICI and ICI Americas,  
20 Chevron Chemical Company had exclusive rights to distribute and sell Paraquat in the United  
21 States and did in fact manufacture, formulate, distribute, and sell Paraquat in the United States,  
22 including in California for use in California, from approximately 1964 until approximately 1986.

23 18. Chevron U.S.A. Inc. is the successor-in-interest to Chevron Chemical Company.

24 19. At all relevant times, Chevron Chemical Company acted as the agent of Chevron  
25 U.S.A. Inc. in selling and distributing Paraquat in the U.S. At all relevant times, Chevron  
26 Chemical Company was acting within the scope of its agency in selling and distributing Paraquat.  
27 Chevron U.S.A. Inc. is liable for the acts of its agent.

28

1 20. From approximately 1964 through approximately 1986, pursuant to distribution  
2 and licensing agreements with Chevron Chemical Company, SAG's and/or SCPLLC's  
3 predecessors-in-interest, ICI and ICI Americas, and Does One through Sixty manufactured some  
4 or all of the Paraquat that Chevron Chemical Company distributed and sold in the United States,  
5 including in California for use in California.

6 21. From approximately 1964 through approximately 1986, pursuant to distribution  
7 and licensing agreements between and among them, ICI, ICI Americas, Chevron Chemical  
8 Company, and Does One through Sixty acted in concert to register, manufacture, formulate, and  
9 distribute and sell (through Chevron Chemical Company) Paraquat for use in the U.S., including  
10 in California for use in California, and their respective successors-in-interest, SAG, SCPLLC, and  
11 Chevron U.S.A. Inc., are jointly liable for the resulting injuries alleged herein.

12 22. After 1986, SCPLLC, Does One through Sixty, and/or their predecessors-in-  
13 interest sold and distributed and continue to sell and distribute Paraquat in the United States,  
14 including in California for use in California.

15 23. As a result of mergers and corporate restructuring, SAG is the successor-in-interest  
16 to ICI.

17 24. As a result of mergers and corporate restructuring, SCPLLC is the successor-in-  
18 interest to ICI Americas, Inc.

19 25. Thus, from approximately 1964 through the present, the Syngenta Defendants,  
20 Does One through Sixty, or their predecessors-in-interest have manufactured, formulated,  
21 distributed, and sold Paraquat for use in the U.S., including in California for use in California.  
22

### 23 **PLAINTIFF'S EXPOSURE TO PARAQUAT**

24 26. At all relevant times, Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON was exposed to Paraquat from  
25 approximately 2005 until 2012: (1) when it was mixed, loaded, applied, and/or cleaned; (2) as a  
26 result of spray drift (the movement of herbicide spray droplets from the target area to an area  
27 where herbicide application was not intended, typically by wind); and/or (3) as a result of contact  
28 with sprayed plants.

1 27. At all relevant times, it was reasonably foreseeable that when Paraquat was used in  
2 the intended or a reasonably foreseeable manner, users of Paraquat and persons nearby would be  
3 exposed to it.

4 28. At all relevant times, it was reasonably foreseeable that Paraquat could enter the  
5 human body: (1) through absorption or penetration of the skin, mucous membranes, and other  
6 epithelial tissues (including tissues of the mouth, nose and nasal passages, trachea, and conducting  
7 airways, particularly where cuts, abrasions, rashes, sores, or other tissue damage were present); (2)  
8 through the olfactory bulb; (3) through respiration into the lungs; and (4) through ingestion into  
9 the digestive tract of small droplets swallowed after entering the mouth, nose, or conducting  
10 airways.

11  
12 **PARAQUAT CAUSES PARKINSON'S DISEASE**

13 29. At all relevant times, it was reasonably foreseeable that Paraquat that entered a  
14 human body could ultimately enter the brain.

15 30. At all relevant times, it was reasonably foreseeable that Paraquat that entered a  
16 human body could induce the misfolding of the alpha synuclein protein.

17 31. Parkinson's disease is a progressive neurodegenerative disorder of the brain that  
18 affects primarily the motor system-the part of the central nervous system that controls movement.

19 32. The characteristic symptoms of Parkinson's disease are its "primary" motor  
20 symptoms: resting tremor (shaking movement when the muscles are relaxed), bradykinesia  
21 (slowness in voluntary movement and reflexes), rigidity (stiffness and resistance to passive  
22 movement), and postural instability (impaired balance).

23 33. Parkinson's disease's primary motor symptoms often result in "secondary" motor  
24 symptoms such as freezing of gait; shrinking handwriting; mask-like expression; slurred,  
25 monotonous, quiet voice; stooped posture; muscle spasms; impaired coordination; difficulty  
26 swallowing; and excess saliva and drooling caused by reduced swallowing movements.

1 34. Non-motor symptoms-such as loss of or altered sense of smell; constipation; low  
2 blood pressure on rising to stand; sleep disturbances; and depression-are present in most cases of  
3 Parkinson’s disease, often for years before any of the primary motor symptoms appear.

4 35. There is currently no cure for Parkinson’s disease; no treatment will stop or reverse  
5 its progression; and the treatments most commonly prescribed for its motor symptoms tend to  
6 become progressively less effective, and to increasingly cause unwelcome side effects, the longer  
7 they are used.

8 36. One of the primary pathophysiological hallmarks of Parkinson’s disease is the  
9 selective degeneration and death of dopaminergic neurons (dopamine-producing nerve cells) in a  
10 part of the brain called the substantia nigra pars compacta (“SNpc”).

11 37. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter (a chemical messenger that transmits signals from  
12 one neuron to another neuron, muscle cell, or gland cell) that is critical to the brain’s control of  
13 motor function (among other things).

14 38. The death of dopaminergic neurons in the SNpc decreases the production of  
15 dopamine. Once dopaminergic neurons die, they are not replaced; when enough dopaminergic  
16 neurons have died, dopamine production falls below the level the brain requires for proper control  
17 of motor function, resulting in the motor symptoms of Parkinson’s disease.

18 39. The presence of Lewy bodies (insoluble aggregates of a protein called alpha-  
19 synuclein) in many of the remaining dopaminergic neurons in the SNpc is another of the primary  
20 pathophysiological hallmarks of Parkinson’s disease.

21 40. Dopaminergic neurons are particularly susceptible to oxidative stress, a disturbance  
22 in the normal balance between oxidants present in cells and cells’ antioxidant defenses.

23 41. Scientists who study Parkinson’s disease generally agree that oxidative stress is a  
24 major factor in-if not the precipitating cause of-the degeneration and death of dopaminergic  
25 neurons in the SNpc and the accumulation of Lewy bodies in the remaining dopaminergic neurons  
26 that are the primary pathophysiological hallmarks of the disease.

27 42. Paraquat is highly toxic to both plants and animals, creating oxidative stress that  
28 causes or contributes to cause the degeneration and death of plant or animal cells.

1 43. Paraquat creates oxidative stress in the cells of plants and animals because of  
2 “redox properties” that are inherent in its chemical composition and structure: it is a strong  
3 oxidant, and it readily undergoes “redox cycling” in the presence of molecular oxygen, which is  
4 plentiful in living cells.

5 44. The redox cycling of Paraquat in living cells interferes with cellular functions that  
6 are necessary to sustain life—with photosynthesis in plant cells, and with cellular respiration in  
7 animal cells. The redox cycling of Paraquat in living cells creates a “reactive oxygen species”  
8 known as superoxide radical, an extremely reactive molecule that can initiate a cascading series of  
9 chemical reactions that creates other reactive oxygen species that damage lipids, proteins, and  
10 nucleic acids, molecules that are essential components of the structures and functions of living  
11 cells. Because the redox cycling of Paraquat can repeat indefinitely in the conditions typically  
12 present in living cells, a single molecule of Paraquat can trigger the production of countless  
13 molecules of destructive superoxide radical.

14 45. Paraquat’s redox properties have been known to science since at least the 1930s.

15 46. It has been scientifically known since the 1960s that Paraquat (due to its redox  
16 properties) is toxic to the cells of plants and animals. The same redox properties that make  
17 Paraquat toxic to plant cells and other types of animal cells make it toxic to dopaminergic neurons  
18 in humans—that is, Paraquat is a strong oxidant that interferes with the function of, damages, and  
19 ultimately kills dopaminergic neurons in the human brain by creating oxidative stress through  
20 redox cycling.

21 47. Paraquat is one of only a handful of toxins that scientists use to produce animal  
22 models of Parkinson’s disease, i.e., use in a laboratory to artificially produce the symptoms of  
23 Parkinson’s disease in animals.

24 48. Animal studies involving various routes of exposure have found that Paraquat  
25 creates oxidative stress that results in the degeneration and death of dopaminergic neurons in the  
26 SNpc, other pathophysiology consistent with that seen in human Parkinson’s disease, and motor  
27 deficits and behavioral changes consistent with those commonly seen in human Parkinson’s  
28 disease.



1 49. Hundreds of in vitro studies (experiments in a test tube, culture dish, or other  
2 controlled experimental environment) have found that Paraquat creates oxidative stress that results  
3 in the degeneration and death of dopaminergic neurons (and many other types of animal cells).

4 50. Epidemiological studies have found that exposure to Paraquat significantly  
5 increases the risk of contracting Parkinson’s disease. A number of studies have found that the risk  
6 of Parkinson’s disease is more than double in populations with occupational exposure to Paraquat  
7 compared to populations without such exposure.

8 51. These convergent lines of evidence (toxicology, animal experiments, and  
9 epidemiology) demonstrate that Paraquat exposure generally can cause Parkinson’s disease.

10  
11 **PARAQUAT REGULATION**

12 52. The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (“FIFRA”), 7 U.S.C. §  
13 136 et seq., which regulates the distribution, sale, and use of pesticides within the U.S., requires  
14 that pesticides be registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) prior to their  
15 distribution, sale, or use, except as described by FIFRA. 7 U.S.C. 136a(a).

16 53. The California Food & Agric. Code § D. 7, Ch. 2, which regulates the labeling,  
17 distribution, use, and application of pesticides within the State of California, requires that  
18 pesticides be registered with the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (“CDPR”) before  
19 they are offered for sale in the State of California. Cal. Food & Agric. Code § 12811.

20 54. Paraquat is a “restricted use pesticide” under federal law, see 40 C.F.R. § 152.175,  
21 which means it is “limited to use by or under the direct supervision of a certified applicator,” and  
22 is a “restricted material” under California law, see Cal. Code Regs. tit. 3, § 6400(e), which means  
23 it cannot be sold, used, or possessed by any person in California without the proper licensing and  
24 permitting.

25 55. As part of the pesticide registration process, the EPA requires, among other things,  
26 a variety of tests to evaluate the potential for exposure to pesticides, toxicity to people and other  
27 potential non-target organisms, and other adverse effects on the environment.

1           56. As a general rule, FIFRA requires registrants, the chemical companies registered to  
2 sell the pesticides, to perform health and safety testing of pesticides. However, FIFRA does not  
3 require the EPA itself to perform health and safety testing of pesticides, and the EPA generally  
4 does not perform such testing.

5           57. The EPA registers (or re-registers) a pesticide if it is persuaded, based largely on  
6 studies and data submitted by the registrant, that: (1) its composition is such as to warrant the  
7 proposed claims for it, 7 U.S.C. § 136a(c)(5)(A); (2) its labeling and other material required to be  
8 submitted comply with the requirements of FIFRA, 7 U.S.C. § 136a(c)(5)(B); (3) it will perform  
9 its intended function without unreasonable adverse effects on the environment, 7 U.S.C. §  
10 136a(c)(5)(C); and (4) when used in accordance with widespread and commonly recognized  
11 practice it will not generally cause unreasonable adverse effects on the environment, 7 U.S.C. §  
12 136a(c)(5)(D).

13           58. FIFRA defines “unreasonable adverse effects on the environment” as “any  
14 unreasonable risk to man or the environment, taking into account the economic, social, and  
15 environmental costs and benefits of the use of any pesticide.” 7 U.S.C. § 136(bb).

16           59. Under FIFRA, “[a]s long as no cancellation proceedings are in effect registration  
17 of a pesticide shall be prima facie evidence that the pesticide, its labeling and packaging comply  
18 with the registration provisions of [FIFRA].” 7 U.S.C. § 136a(f)(2). However, FIFRA further  
19 provides that “[i]n no event shall registration of an article be construed as a defense for the  
20 commission of any offense under [FIFRA].” 7 U.S.C. § 136a(f)(2).

21           60. The distribution or sale of a pesticide that is misbranded is an offense under  
22 FIFRA, which provides in relevant part that “it shall be unlawful for any person in any State to  
23 distribute or sell to any person ... any pesticide which is ... misbranded.” 7 U.S.C. § 136j(a)(1)(E).  
24 A pesticide is misbranded under FIFRA if, among other things: (1) its labeling bears any  
25 statement, design, or graphic representation relative thereto or to its ingredients which is false or  
26 misleading in any particular, 7 U.S.C. § 136(q)(1)(A); (2) the labeling accompanying it does not  
27 contain directions for use which are necessary for effecting the purpose for which the product is  
28 intended and if complied with, together with any requirements imposed under section 136a(d) of

1 this title, are adequate to protect health and the environment, 7 U.S.C. § 136(q)(1)(F); or (3) the  
2 label does not contain a warning or caution statement which may be necessary and if complied  
3 with, together with any requirements imposed under section 136a(d) of this title, is adequate to  
4 protect health and the environment,” 7 U.S.C. § 136(q)(1)(G).

5 61. As a result, a pesticide may be misbranded despite an EPA determination that it  
6 met FIFRA’s registration criteria. In other words, notwithstanding its registration, a pesticide is  
7 misbranded if its label contains “false or misleading” statements, has inadequate instructions for  
8 use, or omits warnings or cautionary statements necessary to protect human health. Similarly, a  
9 pesticide may be found to cause unreasonable adverse effects on humans when used according to  
10 the approved label despite a determination by the EPA that it would not.

11 62. Plaintiff does not seek in this action to impose on Defendants any labeling or  
12 packaging requirement in addition to or different from those required under FIFRA. Any  
13 allegation in this Complaint that a Defendant breached a duty to provide adequate directions for  
14 the use of or warnings about Paraquat, breached a duty to provide adequate packaging for  
15 Paraquat, concealed, suppressed, or omitted to disclose any material fact about Paraquat, or  
16 engaged in any unfair or deceptive practice regarding Paraquat, is intended and should be  
17 construed to be consistent with that alleged breach, concealment, suppression, or omission, or  
18 unfair or deceptive practice having rendered the Paraquat “misbranded” under FIFRA. However,  
19 Plaintiff brings claims and seeks relief in this action only under state law, and does not bring any  
20 claims or seek any relief in this action under FIFRA.

21  
22 **Acts of Syngenta Defendants**

23 63. SAG is a foreign corporation organized and existing under the laws of Switzerland,  
24 with its principal place of business in Basel, Switzerland. It is a successor by merger or  
25 continuation of business to its corporate predecessors, including but not limited to ICI.

26 64. SCPLLC is a limited liability company organized under the laws of the State of  
27 Delaware. It is a successor by merger or continuation of business to its corporate predecessors,  
28

1 including but not limited to ICI Americas. SCPLLC is registered with the State of California,  
2 Secretary of State to do business in the State of California.

3 65. SCPLLC or its corporate predecessors have sufficient minimum contacts with the  
4 State of California and have purposefully availed themselves of the privileges of conducting  
5 business in the State of California, in that they:

6 a. secured and maintained the registration of Paraquat products and other pesticides  
7 with the CDPR to enable themselves and others to manufacture, distribute, sell, and use  
8 these products in the State of California;

9 b. marketed, licensed, advertised, distributed, sold, and delivered Paraquat and  
10 other pesticides to chemical companies, licensees, distributors, and dealers whom they  
11 expected to distribute and sell Paraquat and other pesticides in or for use in the State of  
12 California, including the Chevron Defendants and “Syngenta Retailers,” as well as to  
13 applicators and farmers in the State of California;

14 c. employed or utilized sales representatives to market and sell Paraquat and other  
15 pesticides in California;

16 d. maintained several locations throughout the State of California, including in the  
17 towns of Sanger, Granite Bay and Roseville;

18 e. attended meetings of the CDPR’s Pesticide Registration and Evaluation  
19 Committee relating to the registration of their pesticides, including Paraquat;

20 f. sponsored continuing education seminars for the CDPR at various locations in  
21 the State of California, including the towns of Oxnard, Seal Beach, Rancho Santa Fe,  
22 Somis, Orcutt, Woodland and Pala;

23 g. utilized California state courts to promote their pesticide business, including  
24 filing an action against the CDPR and another pesticide manufacturer for allegedly using  
25 Syngenta data to obtain approval of pesticides for others without its consent, *see Syngenta*  
26 *Crop Prot., Inc. v. Helliker* (2006) 138 Cal.App.4th 1135; and filing an action against the  
27 California EPA’s Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment challenging the  
28 agency’s decision to list its pesticide atrazine as a chemical known to cause reproductive

1 toxicity under Proposition 65, *see Syngenta Crop Protection v. OEHHA* (Sacramento  
2 Superior Court Case No. 34-2014-800001868); and

3 h. performed and funded the testing of pesticides in the State of California.

4 66. SCPLLC's contacts with the State of California are related to or gave rise to this  
5 controversy.

6 67. SAG exercises an unusually high degree of control over SCPLLC, such that  
7 SCPLLC is the agent or mere instrumentality of SAG. SCPLLC's contacts with California are thus  
8 imputed to SAG for purposes of jurisdiction. *See City of Greenville, Ill. v. Syngenta Crop Prot.,*  
9 *Inc.*, 830 F. Supp. 2d 550 (S.D. Ill. 2011).

10  
11 **Acts of Chevron Defendants**

12 68. Chevron U.S.A., Inc. is a corporation organized under the laws of the State of  
13 Pennsylvania, with its headquarters and principal place of business in San Ramon, California.

14 69. Does One through Sixty are corporate entities which are agents, joint venturers,  
15 alter-egos, successors-in-interest, and predecessors-in-interest to Chevron U.S.A., Inc. Does One  
16 through Sixty were each acting within the course and scope of their agency, joint venture, alter-  
17 ego relationship, and corporate interrelationship. The exact nature, relation, and corporate  
18 structure of Does One through Sixty have not yet been finally determined. Plaintiff reserves the  
19 right to amend this complaint with corporate allegations when they are finally determined.

20 70. Jurisdiction is proper over Chevron U.S.A. Inc. because it is a California resident  
21 and citizen, maintaining its principal place of business and headquarters in California.

22  
23 **DEFENDANTS' TORTIOUS CONDUCT RESULTED IN JOSEPH NELSON**  
24 **DEVELOPING PARKINSON'S DISEASE**

25 71. Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON hereby refers to, incorporates, and re-alleges by this  
26 reference as though set forth in full, each and every allegation hereinabove and makes them a part  
27 of the following allegations.

1           72. Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON is a resident and citizen of Ramsey County,  
2 Minnesota.

3           73. Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON was exposed to Paraquat manufactured and sold by  
4 Defendants.

5           74. Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON mixed Paraquat, transferred it into application  
6 equipment, sprayed it, and cleaned the equipment from approximately 2005 until 2012.

7           75. During this time, Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON was in close contact to the Paraquat  
8 that was designed, manufactured, and distributed by Defendants, and each of them. During that  
9 time, Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON would also mix, load, spray, and/or clean Paraquat.

10           76. The Paraquat to which Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON was exposed entered his body  
11 through absorption or penetration of the skin, mucous membranes, and other epithelial tissues  
12 (including tissues of the mouth, nose and nasal passages, trachea, and conducting airways,  
13 particularly where cuts, abrasions, rashes, sores, or other tissue damage are present); and/or 2)  
14 through the olfactory bulb; and/or 3) through respiration into the lungs; and/or 4) through  
15 ingestion into the digestive tract of small droplets swallowed after entering the mouth, nose, or  
16 conducting airways. Once absorbed, the Paraquat entered his bloodstream, attacked his nervous  
17 system, and was substantial factor in causing him to suffer Parkinson's disease.

18           77. Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in or about  
19 2019.

20           78. Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON had no reason to suspect the diagnosis was connected  
21 to his past Paraquat exposure.

22           79. Although Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON knew that the Paraquat to which he was  
23 exposed was acutely toxic, he had no reason to suspect that chronic, low-dose exposure to  
24 Paraquat could cause neurological diseases such as Parkinson's disease.

25           80. Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON was never told, either by a medical professional, by  
26 media, or by the Defendants, that chronic, low-dose exposure to Paraquat could cause him to  
27 suffer Parkinson's disease.  
28

1           81. Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON first became aware of Paraquat's role in causing his  
2 Parkinson's disease and the wrongful acts of the Defendants that caused or contributed to his  
3 developing Parkinson's disease within a year of the filing date of this Complaint.

4           82. Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON did not discover this earlier because he had no reason  
5 to suspect that his working with Paraquat could cause him to suffer Parkinson's disease.

6           83. Defendants' acts and omissions were a legal, proximate, and substantial factor in  
7 causing Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON to suffer severe and permanent physical injuries, pain, mental  
8 anguish, and disability, and will continue to do so for the remainder of his life.

9           84. By reason of the premises, it became necessary for Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON to  
10 incur expenses from medical care and treatment, and related costs and expenses required in the  
11 care and treatment of said injuries. Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON'S damages in this respect are  
12 presently unascertained as said services are still continuing.

13           85. By reason of the premises, it will be necessary for Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON to  
14 incur future expenses for medical care and treatment, and related costs and expenses required for  
15 future care and treatment. Plaintiff's damages in this respect are presently unascertained as said  
16 services are still continuing. Plaintiff prays leave to insert elements of damages in this respect  
17 when the same are finally determined.

18           86. By reason of the premises, Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON has been at times unable to  
19 maintain regular employment, incurring special damages in a presently unascertained sum as said  
20 loss is still continuing. Plaintiff prays leave to insert elements of damages with regards to past  
21 wage loss, future wage loss, and lost earning capacity when the same are finally determined.

22           87. By reason of the premises, Plaintiff has suffered general (non-economic) damages  
23 in a sum in excess of the jurisdictional minimum of this court.

24           88. By reason of the premises, Plaintiff has suffered special (economic) damages in a  
25 sum in excess of the jurisdictional minimum of this court.

**CAUSES OF ACTION**

**COUNT I - STRICT PRODUCTS LIABILITY DESIGN DEFECT**

89. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each allegation set forth in preceding paragraphs as if fully stated herein.

90. Defendants are liable to Plaintiff under a products liability theory for marketing a defectively-designed product, as well as for failing to adequately warn of the risk of severe neurological injury caused by chronic, low-dose exposure to Paraquat.

91. At all relevant times, Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the Syngenta Defendants, Does One through Sixty, and their corporate predecessors designed, manufactured, distributed, and sold Paraquat for use in the State of California.

92. At all relevant times and places, the Paraquat that Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the Syngenta Defendants, Does One through Sixty, and their corporate predecessors designed, manufactured, distributed, and sold was used in the intended or a reasonably foreseeable manner.

93. Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON was exposed to Paraquat that Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the Syngenta Defendants, Does One through Sixty, and their corporate predecessors designed, manufactured, distributed, and sold. As a result of that exposure, Paraquat entered Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON'S body causing Plaintiff to develop Parkinson's disease.

94. The Paraquat that Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the Syngenta Defendants, Does One through Sixty, and their corporate predecessors designed, manufactured, distributed, and sold did not perform as safely as an ordinary consumer would have expected it to perform when used in the intended or a reasonably foreseeable manner, in that:

a. as designed, manufactured, formulated and packaged Paraquat was likely to be inhaled, ingested, and absorbed into the bodies of persons who used it, who were nearby while it was being used, or who entered fields or orchards where it had been sprayed (or areas near where it had been sprayed); and

b. when inhaled, ingested, or absorbed into the body, it was likely to cause neurological damage that was both permanent and cumulative, and repeated low-dose exposures were likely to cause neurodegenerative disease, including Parkinson's disease.



1           95.     Alternatively, Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the Syngenta Defendants, Does One through  
2 Sixty, and their corporate predecessors' Paraquat products were defectively designed in that the  
3 risk of danger inherent in the challenged design outweighed the benefits of such design,  
4 considering, among other relevant factors, the gravity of the danger posed by the challenged  
5 design, the likelihood that such danger would occur, the mechanical feasibility of a safer  
6 alternative design, the financial cost of an improved design, and the adverse consequences to the  
7 product and to the consumer that would result from an alternative design.

8           96.     The design defect existed when the Paraquat left Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the Syngenta  
9 Defendants, Does One through Sixty, and their corporate predecessors' possession and control.

10           WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests that this Court enter judgment in Plaintiff's  
11 favor for compensatory and punitive damages, together with interest, costs herein incurred,  
12 attorneys' fees and all relief as this Court deems just and proper. Additionally, Plaintiff demands a  
13 jury trial on all issues contained herein.

14  
15                   **COUNT II - STRICT PRODUCTS LIABILITY FAILURE TO WARN**

16           97.     Defendants are also liable to Plaintiff under a products liability theory based on  
17 their failure to adequately warn of the risks of Paraquat. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each  
18 allegation set forth in preceding paragraphs as if fully stated herein.

19           98.     When Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the Syngenta Defendants, Does One through Sixty, and  
20 their corporate predecessors manufactured and sold the Paraquat to which Plaintiff was exposed, it  
21 was known or knowable to Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the Syngenta Defendants, Does One through  
22 Sixty, and their corporate predecessors in light of scientific knowledge that was generally accepted  
23 in the scientific community that:

24                   a. Paraquat was designed, manufactured, formulated, and packaged such that it was  
25 likely to be inhaled, ingested, and absorbed into the bodies of persons who used it, who  
26 were nearby while it was being used, or who entered fields or orchards where it had been  
27 sprayed or areas near where it had been sprayed; and  
28

1 b. when inhaled, ingested, or absorbed into the body, it was likely cause latent  
 2 neurological damage that was both permanent and cumulative, and that repeated, low-dose  
 3 exposures were likely to cause neurodegenerative disease, including Parkinson’s disease.

4 99. The risk of contracting Parkinson’s disease from chronic, low-dose exposure to  
 5 Paraquat presented a substantial danger to users of Paraquat when the product was used in a  
 6 reasonably foreseeable manner.

7 100. An ordinary consumer would not have recognized the potential risk of permanent,  
 8 irreversible neurological damage, including the risk of contracting Parkinson’s disease, from  
 9 chronic, low-dose exposure to Paraquat.

10 101. Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the Syngenta Defendants, Does One through Sixty, and their  
 11 corporate predecessors failed to warn of the potential risk of permanent, irreversible neurological  
 12 damage from chronic, low-dose exposure to Paraquat, and failed to provide adequate instructions  
 13 regarding avoidance of these risks.

14 102. As a direct and proximate result of Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the Syngenta Defendants,  
 15 Does One through Sixty, and their corporate predecessors’ marketing a defective product, Plaintiff  
 16 suffered the injuries described in this Complaint.

17 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests that this Court enter judgment in Plaintiff’s  
 18 favor for compensatory and punitive damages, together with interest, costs herein incurred,  
 19 attorneys’ fees and all relief as this Court deems just and proper. Additionally, Plaintiff demands a  
 20 jury trial on all issues contained herein.

21

22

**COUNT III - NEGLIGENCE**

23 103. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each allegation set forth in preceding paragraphs as  
 24 if fully stated herein.

25 104. At all relevant times, Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the Syngenta Defendants, Does One  
 26 through Sixty, and their corporate predecessors designed, manufactured, distributed, and sold  
 27 Paraquat for use in the State of California and throughout the United States.

28

1           105. Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON was exposed to Paraquat that Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the  
2 Syngenta Defendants, Does One through Sixty, and their corporate predecessors manufactured and  
3 sold.

4           106. The Paraquat to which Plaintiff was exposed was used in the intended or a reasonably  
5 foreseeable manner.

6           107. At all times relevant to this claim, in researching, designing, manufacturing,  
7 packaging, labeling, distributing, and selling Paraquat, Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the Syngenta  
8 Defendants, Does One through Sixty, and their corporate predecessors owed a duty to exercise  
9 ordinary care for the health and safety of the persons whom it was reasonably foreseeable could be  
10 exposed to Paraquat, including Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON.

11           108. When Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the Syngenta Defendants, Does One through Sixty, and  
12 their corporate predecessors designed, manufactured, packaged, labeled, distributed, and sold the  
13 Paraquat to which Plaintiff was exposed, it was reasonably foreseeable that Paraquat:

14               a. was likely to be inhaled, ingested, and absorbed into the bodies of persons who  
15 used it, who were nearby while it was being used, or who entered fields or orchards where  
16 it had been sprayed or areas near where it had been sprayed; and

17               b. when inhaled, ingested, or absorbed into the bodies of persons who used it, who  
18 were nearby while it was being used, or who entered fields or orchards where it has been  
19 sprayed or areas near where it has been sprayed, it was likely to cause neurological damage  
20 that was both permanent and cumulative, and repeated exposures were likely to cause  
21 neurodegenerative disease, including Parkinson's disease.

22           109. In breach of the aforementioned duty to Plaintiff, Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the  
23 Syngenta Defendants, Does One through Sixty, and their corporate predecessors negligently:

24               a. failed to design, manufacture, formulate, and package Paraquat to make it  
25 unlikely to be inhaled, ingested, and absorbed into the bodies of persons who used it, who  
26 were nearby while it was being used, or who entered fields or orchards where it had been  
27 sprayed or areas near where it had been sprayed;

1           b. designed, manufactured, and formulated Paraquat such that it was likely to cause  
2 neurological damage that was both permanent and cumulative, and repeated exposures  
3 were likely to cause clinically significant neurodegenerative disease, including Parkinson's  
4 disease;

5           c. failed to conduct adequate research and testing to determine the extent to which  
6 exposure to Paraquat was likely to occur through inhalation, ingestion, and absorption into  
7 the bodies of persons who used it, who were nearby while it was being used, or who  
8 entered fields or orchards where it had been sprayed or areas near where it had been  
9 sprayed;

10           d. failed to conduct adequate research and testing to determine the extent to which  
11 Paraquat spray drift was likely to occur, including its propensity to drift, the distance it was  
12 likely to drift, and the extent to which Paraquat spray droplets were likely to enter the  
13 bodies of persons spraying it or other persons nearby during or after spraying;

14           e. failed to conduct adequate research and testing to determine the extent to which  
15 Paraquat was likely to cause or contribute to cause latent neurological damage that was  
16 both permanent and cumulative, and the extent to which repeated exposures were likely to  
17 cause or contribute to cause clinically significant neurodegenerative disease, including  
18 Parkinson's disease;

19           f. failed to direct that Paraquat be used in a manner that would have made it  
20 unlikely to be inhaled, ingested, and absorbed into the bodies of persons who used it, who  
21 were nearby while it was being used, or who entered fields or orchards where it had been  
22 sprayed or areas near where it had been sprayed; and

23           g. failed to warn that Paraquat was likely to cause neurological damage that was  
24 both permanent and cumulative, and repeated exposures were likely to cause clinically  
25 significant neurodegenerative disease, including Parkinson's disease.

26           110. Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the Syngenta Defendants, Does One through Sixty, and their  
27 corporate predecessors knew or should have known that users would not realize the dangers of  
28

1 exposure to Paraquat and negligently failed to take reasonable steps to prevent the foreseeable risk  
2 of harm from exposure to Paraquat.

3 111. As a direct and proximate result of Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the Syngenta Defendants,  
4 Does One through Sixty, and their corporate predecessors' negligence, Plaintiff suffered the  
5 injuries described in this Complaint.

6 112. Additionally, in the course of designing, manufacturing, packaging, labeling,  
7 distributing, and selling Paraquat, Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the Syngenta Defendants, Does One  
8 through Sixty, and their corporate predecessors violated laws, statutes, and regulations, including  
9 but not limited to: sections of Food & Agriculture Code, Division 7, Chapter 2 (Pesticides) and  
10 sections of Title 3, California Code of Regulations, Division 6 (Pesticides).

11 113. Plaintiff was a member of the class of persons that said laws, statutes, and  
12 regulations were intended to protect.

13 114. The violations of said laws, statutes, and regulations by Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the  
14 Syngenta Defendants, and Does One through Sixty were also substantial factors in causing  
15 Plaintiff's injuries.

16 115. The injuries that resulted from the violations by Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the Syngenta  
17 Defendants, and Does One through Sixty were the kind of occurrences the laws, statutes, and  
18 regulations were designed to protect against.

19 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests that this Court enter judgment in Plaintiff's  
20 favor for compensatory and punitive damages, together with interest, costs herein incurred,  
21 attorneys' fees and all relief as this Court deems just and proper. Additionally, Plaintiff demands a  
22 jury trial on all issues contained herein.

23  
24 **COUNT IV - BREACH OF IMPLIED WARRANTY OF MERCHANTABILITY**

25 116. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each allegation set forth in preceding paragraphs  
26 as if fully stated herein.

27 117. At all relevant times, Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the Syngenta Defendants, Does One  
28 through Sixty, and their corporate predecessors engaged in the business of designing,

1 manufacturing, distributing, and selling Paraquat and other restricted-use pesticides and held  
2 themselves out as having special knowledge or skill regarding Paraquat and other restricted-use  
3 pesticides.

4 118. At all relevant times, Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the Syngenta Defendants, Does One  
5 through Sixty, and their corporate predecessors designed, manufactured, distributed, and sold  
6 Paraquat for use in the State of California.

7 119. Plaintiff was exposed to Paraquat that Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the Syngenta  
8 Defendants, Does One through Sixty, and their corporate predecessors designed, manufactured,  
9 distributed, and sold.

10 120. The Paraquat to which Plaintiff JOSEPH NELSON was exposed was not fit for the  
11 ordinary purposes for which it was used, and in particular:

12 a. it was designed, manufactured, formulated, and packaged such that it was likely  
13 to be inhaled, ingested, and absorbed into the bodies of persons who used it, who were  
14 nearby while it was being used, or who entered fields or orchards where it had been  
15 sprayed or areas near where it had been sprayed; and

16 b. when inhaled, ingested, or absorbed into the bodies of persons who used it, who  
17 were nearby while it was being used, or who entered fields or orchards where it had been  
18 sprayed or areas near where it had been sprayed, it was likely to cause neurological  
19 damage that was both permanent and cumulative, and repeated exposures were likely to  
20 cause neurodegenerative disease, including Parkinson's disease.

21 121. As a direct and proximate result of Chevron U.S.A. Inc., the Syngenta Defendants,  
22 Does One through Sixty, and their corporate predecessors' breach of implied warranty, Plaintiff  
23 suffered the injuries herein described.

24 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests that this Court enter judgment in Plaintiff's  
25 favor for compensatory and punitive damages, together with interest, costs herein incurred,  
26 attorneys' fees and all relief as this Court deems just and proper. Additionally, Plaintiff demands a  
27 jury trial on all issues contained herein.

28

**COUNT V- PUNITIVE DAMAGES**

1  
2 122. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each allegation set forth in preceding paragraphs  
3 as if fully stated herein.

4 123. Defendants’ conduct as alleged herein was done with oppression, fraud, and malice.  
5 Defendants were fully aware of the safety risks of Paraquat. Nonetheless, Defendants deliberately  
6 crafted their label, marketing, and promotion to mislead farmers and consumers.

7 124. This was not done by accident or through some justifiable negligence. Rather,  
8 Defendants knew that it could turn a profit by convincing the agricultural industry that Paraquat  
9 did not cause Parkinson’s Disease, and that full disclosure of the true risks of Paraquat would limit  
10 the amount of money Defendants would make selling Paraquat in California. Defendants’  
11 objective was accomplished not only through its misleading labeling, but through a comprehensive  
12 scheme of selective fraudulent research and testing, misleading advertising, and deceptive  
13 omissions as more fully alleged throughout this pleading. Plaintiff was denied the right to make an  
14 informed decision about whether to purchase, use, or be exposed to an herbicide, knowing the full  
15 risks attendant to that use. Such conduct was done with conscious disregard of Plaintiff’s rights.

16 125. There is no indication that Defendants will stop their deceptive and unlawful  
17 marketing practices unless they are punished and deterred. Accordingly, Plaintiff requests punitive  
18 damages against the Defendants for the harms caused to Plaintiff.

19 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests that this Court enter judgment in Plaintiff’s  
20 favor for compensatory and punitive damages, together with interest, costs herein incurred,  
21 attorneys’ fees and all relief as this Court deems just and proper. Additionally, Plaintiff demands a  
22 jury trial on all issues contained herein.

23  
24 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

25 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff requests this Court to enter judgment in Plaintiff’s favor and  
26 against the Defendants for:

- 27 a. actual or compensatory damages in such amount to be determined at trial and as  
28 provided by applicable law;

- 1 b. exemplary and punitive damages sufficient to punish and deter the Defendants and  
2 others from future fraudulent practices;  
3 c. pre-judgment and post-judgment interest;  
4 d. costs including reasonable attorneys' fees, court costs, and other litigation  
5 expenses; and  
6 e. any other relief the Court may deem just and proper.  
7

8 **JURY TRIAL DEMAND**

9 Plaintiff demands a trial by jury on all of the triable issues within this pleading.  
10

11 Dated: May 17, 2021

12 Respectfully Submitted,

13 */s/Jennie Scudder-Levin*

14 Jennie Scudder-Levin (SBN 144354)

15 Fidelma L. Fitzpatrick (*pro hac vice* pending)

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