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Rethinking the Rachel Carson Legacy

Opposition to DDT Has Cost Millions of Lives

by [CEI Staff](#)

May 21, 2007

Washington, D.C., May 21, 2007—As environmentalists around the world prepare this week to celebrate the 100th birthday of author Rachel Carson, the Competitive Enterprise Institute is launching a campaign to reassess her legacy. A new website, www.RachelWasWrong.com, explains the unintended consequences of her opposition to pesticide use, including millions of preventable deaths in developing countries.

In her 1962 book, *Silent Spring*, Carson warned of environmental and health problems from overuse of chemical pesticides, such as DDT, on farm fields. In the following years, opposition to the use of DDT continued to grow, until it was banned for use in the U.S. by the Environmental Protection Agency in 1972. Unfortunately, activist pressure didn't stop there. Environmental campaigners opposed its use not just in American farm fields, but also in countries where it was used to kill mosquitoes that transmit diseases like malaria. International aid agencies and officials in donor countries also put pressure on poor nations to abandon DDT for use in public health programs. Because of the prevalence of malaria and a lack of affordable alternatives, millions of people have died over the last 35 years because DDT was not available.

“While Carson may have meant well, her rhetoric and anti-technology views produced devastating consequences, particularly for children in Africa,” says CEI’s [Angela Logomasini](#). “Our website includes photographs of some children who lost their lives to malaria since DDT was banned. We ask that people remember their birthdays too, with the hope that it will encourage policymakers to rethink foolish and dangerous policies.”

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Recently seen in: The Wall Street Journal, Financial Times, New York Post, Environmental Health Perspectives, Inside the EPA, and others.



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