Shell, BASF Offer Millions In Class Action Suit

The Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — Shell Brasil SA and BASF SA have offered more than $20 million to settle a class-action lawsuit with former workers allegedly contaminated at a pesticide plant in the state of Sao Paulo, Brazil's top labor court said Friday.

The court said on its website that the two companies have offered to provide 884 workers with lifelong health plans with a "global value" of 52 million reals ($26 million).

Representatives of the two companies and workers are scheduled to meet again at the end of a month to discuss the proposal, the court said.

Shell spokesman Glauco Paiva confirmed the offer of a lifelong health plan but said "for now we prefer not to mention any numbers." BASF also confirmed the offer on its website.

The chemical plant operated from 1977 until it was closed in 2002. Shell originally owned it, but sold the operation to American Cyanamid in 1995. Germany-based BASF bought American Cyanamid in 2000 and took over the chemicals plant in the city of Paulinia.

In its 2011 annual report, BASF SE, the parent company of BASF SA, acknowledged the site was "significantly contaminated by the production of crop protection products." It claimed that the site was contaminated before it bought the plant.

Prosecutors have said that former workers at the plant and people who live near it have shown many health problems, including prostate cancer, problems with short-term memory and issues with their thyroid glands.

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