Genetically modified crops encourage beneficial bugs

Environmentalists might one day run barefooted through insect-rich fields of genetically modified crops. At least, they might if the conclusions of a two-decade study in China hold up. Kongming Wu of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences in Beijing and colleagues looked at the impact on surrounding farms of Bt cotton, a GM crop that protects itself against bollworm larvae by making its own pesticide. As pesticide sprays were no longer needed, beneficial predator insects such as ladybirds, spiders and lacewings could thrive and spill over onto neighbouring farms, where they ate aphids. This reduced the amount of pesticides neighbouring farmers used.

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