

Bananas and genetic engineering: Past, present and future

Scientists are fighting to protect the hundreds of bananas and plantains people eat around the world from a blizzard of pests: insects, fungi, worms, bacteria and viruses. They're using old methods and new ones in their fight, as noted in [our news story](#) on the successful sequencing of the banana genome by French scientists.

In Uganda, for example, scientists have been using conventional breeding, crossing fertile wild bananas to local bananas that are eaten. They're trying to develop resistances to banana blights such as black leaf streak disease, a.k.a. black sigatoka, said Andrew Kiggundu, plant biotechnology research officer at the country's National Agricultural Research Laboratories Institute in Kawanda. The Black Sigatoka fungus attacks the leaves and can cause production losses of up to 50%.

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