

Coffee in crisis: Transgenics to the rescue?

The following is an edited excerpt.

Central American coffee production is on red alert because of the coffee rust fungus. The fungus currently afflicts 50% of all growing areas in the region.

Some coffee varieties will not be affected by the disease since they are naturally resistant. These varieties are the Robusta varieties, which are considered to be of lower quality than their Arabica counterparts. We need something new. We need Arabica coffee varieties that are naturally resistant to the fungus.

One way we could do this is through conventional breeding, but developing a pure Arabica, rust-resistant variety and releasing it for commercial use could take up to a decade, which is too much time.

We need transgenics to save coffee.

Read the full article here: [Coffee the next crop to be saved by Transgenics?](#)

Additional Resources:

- ["Disease Outbreak Threatens the Future of Good Coffee,"](#) Wired
— *This Wired article is a compliment to the Biofortified blog post, which it helped inspire.*
- ["Guatemala's coffee rust 'emergency' devastates crops,"](#) BBC News
— *Background on the coffee rust fungus and the state of emergency in Guatemala.*
- ["Protect Kona Coffee from GMO: Kona Coffee Farmers Association Supports County Bill 79,"](#) Hawaii

Reporter

— *Coffee growers in Hawaii were among many to resist GM crops; what sort of resistance a transgenic coffee crop might encounter in Central America remains to be seen.*