

Crops that can genetically modify their pests

At the pesticide frontier is a totally fascinating and, in this context, vaguely ominous thing called RNAi. It's basically a way to silence certain sequences in a target's genes.

One way to picture how it works is to imagine an RNAi technique targeting the parts of the human genome that tell your body to make white blood cells. A certain kind of RNA storms in, slices up your genes, and, hey look, no white blood cells.

There are three projects looking at RNAi's potential in agriculture currently underway. The basic idea is to make crops capable of their own RNAi techniques. The most interesting of these are cotton plants that produce double-stranded RNA that suppresses a particular gene in bollworms.

Read the full story here: The Next Frontier of GMOs Is Crops That Can Genetically Modify Insects Themselves

Additional Resources:

- "Dow announces name of three-gene insect protection in cotton," Delta Farm Press
- "Monsanto's Plan to Help the Honeybee: Monsanto and others look to RNA interference to fight widespread bee-killing mites," MIT Technology Review