

Welcome to the strange new world of synthetic biology

Over the past decade, the ease of sequencing and creating DNA has improved so much that the possibilities of genetic engineering have expanded tremendously.

Researchers can now go way beyond the slight tinkering they've been done in the past — like adding or deactivating a single gene. Instead, some scientists are now focusing on broadly creating and reengineering living things wholesale to improve our environment, our energy, and our health.

Welcome to the strange new world of synthetic biology, in which living things are a tool to be manipulated for practical ends. It's a world in which, someday, organisms designed from scratch could convert waste into fuel or enter people's bodies to kill cancer.

Some scientists see synthetic biology as the best bet to tackle some of the world's most pressing problems — like the ever-increasing demand for food and energy. But the prospect of possible mishaps, not to mention concerns about tinkering with life to begin with, are certainly there, too.

Read the full, original story: [How scientists are creating synthetic life from scratch](#)