

GE can help address California's drought

The United Nations has called drought the [“world's costliest natural disaster,”](#) both financially, imposing an annual cost of \$6-8 billion, and in human terms; since 1900, it has affected two billion people, leading to more than 11 million deaths. That is because so much of the world is vulnerable; currently affected areas include Australia, Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, North and South America, and the Middle East.

Given that agriculture accounts for [70% of water consumption](#), on average, worldwide, it seems logical that this sector should be the focus of conservation measures. And, in fact, a proven technology exists that could go a long way toward reducing the impact of drought: genetic engineering (GE).

Sometimes called “genetic modification,” GE enables plant breeders to make existing crop plants do new things – such as conserve water. Even with research and development hampered by resistance from activists and excessive government regulation, drought-resistant GE crop varieties are emerging from the development pipeline in many parts of the world.

But, in the long term, the greatest boon of all, for both food security and the environment, will likely be the ability of new crop varieties to tolerate periods of drought and other water-related stresses. Even a small reduction in the amount of water used for irrigation could have huge benefits, especially in drought conditions.

Read the full, original article: [More Crop for the Drop](#)