

## Consumer acceptance of GMO rubber more likely than of GMO oranges

For crops that are grown in monocultures, especially trees and vines that take years to bear fruit and can't be rotated, dealing with pests is especially tough. Two crops, oranges and rubber are facing a similar fate to the Gros Michael banana which was wiped out by a Panama disease in the 50's.

Things are going well for rubber, relatively speaking. A species of flowering plant called the Kazakh dandelion produces high-quality rubber at its roots; it's on the short list of potential replacements for the fragile, notoriously finicky rubber trees as a worldwide rubber source. Geneticists have bred the Kazakh to grow up to a full foot tall, producing quite a lot of rubber at the root—about on par, per acre, with the most productive rubber plantations in Asia.

Genetic engineers have also bred these rubber-producing Kazakh dandelions to grow their leaves upward instead of flat so harvesting machines have something to hook onto when pulling the crop out of the ground (the resulting plant is an enormous dandelion with leaves sticking straight out of the ground, upward and slightly to the side of the stem—it looks like a cartoon plant). Despite anti-GMO suspicion, resistance by consumers is surprisingly scant; perhaps people simply don't care what's put in their tires.

For oranges, the situation is hazier. In 2013, Ricke Kress, president of Southern Gardens Citrus (a conglomerate that owns 2.5 million orange trees and a factory that squeezes juice for Tropicana and Florida's Natural) started investigating three particular breeds of genetically modified oranges that could withstand citrus greening—one with genes from a pig, one with a synthetic genome and one with genes from spinach. The "pig" and "synthetic" oranges were eventually rejected: Though nearly identical to unmodified oranges, consumers were turned off by the "creep factor." Even the "spinach oranges" prompted suspicion; The New York Times reports that Erik Mirkov, the inventor of the "spinach oranges," was bombarded with questions like "Will my juice taste like spinach?" and "Will it be green?"

**Read full, original article:** [Can GMOs Save Our Oranges?](#)