

## GMO white sea cucumbers could make costly Chinese delicacy affordable

Sea cucumbers, sluglike creatures that hug the seafloor, have long been a prized delicacy at Chinese banquets, the mark of a special occasion. And no variety of sea cucumber is more valued, or costlier, than the exceedingly rare albino. Just a few years ago, five white sea cucumbers sold at auction in the city of Jinan for 160,000 renminbi, or nearly \$26,000 at today's exchange rate.

Now, Chinese scientists say they have cracked the genetic code of the albino sea cucumber, opening the door to its mass production.

According to the report by the [Institute of Oceanology, Chinese Academy of Sciences](#), in Qingdao, researchers who have been studying the genetic makeup of sea cucumbers have identified the gene responsible for albinism, and have begun producing genetically modified albinos. This year alone, it says, the scientists, led by [Dr. Yang Hongsheng](#), have succeeded in breeding 150 million white sea cucumbers suitable for aquaculture.

With the prospect of large-scale production, can shoppers expect some day to find packages of inexpensive white sea cucumbers next to the frozen shrimp and scallops in their local supermarkets?

Liu Yang, a spokesman for the Institute of Oceanology, said in a telephone interview that it was too early to assess the commercial possibilities. "It's a new technology that hasn't been industrialized, so we don't know what economic benefits it will bring," he said. "It's hard to predict."

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Albino Sea Cucumbers, a Delicacy, Could Become a Lot Less Rare](#)**