

New biofortified GMO rice will cost farmers no more than conventional

A NEW genetically modified rice variety could improve the health of people suffering from nutrient deficiencies in Asia.

The variety, known as IR 64 and widely grown in Asia, has been fortified with iron and zinc. Tests showed the genetically modified rice has four times the level of iron and zinc than normal white rice.

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It was successfully trialled in Colombia and the Philippines, where tests showed humans could absorb the iron and zinc, and the next step was to work with the government of Bangladesh to grow it there.

In Bangladesh . . . iron deficiency is widespread.

“But it has . . . no additional charge above the normal price of the rice,” [botanist Alex Johnson, who is involved in the research] said. “It’s funded by Harvest Plus, which is backed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

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“We had to weigh the cost and benefit of breeding GM against non-GM and conventional breeding would not allow us to realise the target level of iron,” he said.

“Other nutrients can be increased with conventional breeding but not iron.”

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: Genetically modified rice fights hidden hunger