

# GMO papaya saved an \$11 million industry in Hawaii—and set off a political storm

It started with rotting flesh.

...

It was a sign of trouble for hundreds of Hawaiian papaya farmers who, for the next several years, would lose field after field of their crop — altogether an [\\$11-million dollar industry](#). The culprit was an incurable virus called Papaya Ring Spot Virus (PRSV).

In 1992, Dennis Gonsalves, a plant pathologist at Cornell University who grew up in the region most acutely affected by the virus, came up with a wild idea to stop it. He wanted to vaccinate the papaya crop from the virus using genetic engineering. To do it, Gonsalves and two other scientists (his wife Carol Gonsalves and David R. Lee) opened up the papaya genome and carefully inserted [a gene from the ring spot virus](#) into its genetic code.

Screen Shot at PM  
Dennis Gonsalves

After nearly a decade of work, Gonsalves and his team created a papaya plant that was genetically resistant to ring spot. The Gonsalves' crops blossomed across farms that had been decimated by the virus. Today, their fruit, which they named the Rainbow papaya, dominates Hawaii's papaya exports.

...

Yet instead of ending a storm, as the crop's name might suggest, the Rainbow papaya unleashed its own tempest.

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post:** [A Cornell scientist saved an \\$11-million industry — and ignited a food controversy that's raged for 30 years](#)