

CRISPR crop: Disease-resistant cassava staple could help tackle hunger in Africa

To prove that a new-gene editing technology could be used to alter the cassava plant, scientists in the St. Louis suburbs zeroed in on a gene used to process chloroform. Before long, they had petri dishes full of seedlings that [were white as chalk](#).

The plan is to use CRISPR — a cheaper, faster way to genetically modify crops — to grow cassava plants that are resistant to common plant viruses threatening food supplies in East Africa. But regulatory agencies have yet to finalize how they will treat the new crops.

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[Nigel Taylor, of the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center in Creve Coeur] has spent more than a decade developing strains of cassava that are resistant to brown streak disease and mosaic virus through traditional breeding methods and genetic engineering. Both viruses are spread by whiteflies, a common pest, and can wipe out an entire crop before a farmer knows that a field is contaminated.

[In conjunction with researchers in Uganda and Kenya](#), Taylor's team has distributed traditionally bred cassava to farmers in East Africa and is conducting field trials of genetically modified, virus-resistant strains.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [In a race to prevent hunger, Danforth researchers use CRISPR to gene-edit cassava](#)