

Edible cotton? USDA approves biotech seeds that can be spread like peanut butter

Americans may soon be eating cotton for the first time — not just wearing it — as a new edible variety is poised to enter the market.

On [October 16], the U.S. Department of Agriculture gave the green light to commercialize a [biotech version](#) of the cotton plant whose seeds can be eaten, according to Texas A&M University, which developed it over more than two decades. U.S. [Food and Drug Administration approval is still needed](#), which the university said it expects within months. After that, farmers will be able to grow cotton for food as well as for fiber.

Texas A&M professor Keerti Rathore started working on the project 23 years ago, and figured out how to silence a gene in the plant that produced a toxin, called gossypol. While gossypol protects the plant from insects, it made the seeds inedible to humans and most animals.

“It’ll taste like hummus,” Rathore said. “It’s not at all unpleasant.”

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As a tree nut, its nutritional value is similar to other nuts, like almonds or walnuts. Food technologists have experimented by making cottonseed milk, crackers, cookies, nut butters and chopped-nut substitutes The protein could also be extracted and made into a powder that can go into energy bars or flours

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