

Biofortified cassava could help fight anemia, which impacts 75% of preschool children in Nigeria

The “hidden hunger” caused by micronutrient deficiency is a global threat to human health, with particularly severe impacts in Africa. In Nigeria, 75 percent of preschool children and 67 percent of pregnant women are anemic, and 20 percent of children below five years suffer from zinc deficiency....

Developing new varieties of a staple food crop with elevated levels of these two minerals could significantly improve diets and health. In a paper published today in the journal [*Nature Biotechnology*](#)....an international team of researchers demonstrated that field-grown cassava plants overexpressing a combination of plant genes can accumulate significantly higher concentrations of both iron and zinc.

The elevated mineral levels of the ‘biofortified’ cassava storage roots are retained after processing into common foodstuffs and are nutritionally available at levels that could have a significant impact on the health of cassava-consuming populations in West Africa.

“This work showed us that it is possible to raise the iron and zinc content of cassava roots while maintaining yield and other plant characteristics that are important to farmers and consumers,” [Nigel Taylor, associate member at the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center,] said. “We also confirmed that the higher mineral levels don’t disappear during cooking, which means that better nutrition can actually reach the dinner plate and the digestive tract.”

Read full, original article: [CASSAVA HIGH IN IRON AND ZINC COULD IMPROVE DIETS AND HEALTH IN WEST AFRICA](#)