

GMO Bt crops slow global spread of fall armyworm pest, but some bugs resistant to insecticidal plants

The fall armyworm is hungry, on the move and scaring farmers the world over. The crop-devouring pest has spread from the Americas to Africa and Asia, gorging on rice, corn, vegetables, cotton and more. Europe, [Australia](#) and Southeast Asia could be next. In its first three years in Africa alone, it inflicted [\\$13.3 billion](#) of crop losses. A recent arrival in China, the fast-moving grub [may infest](#) the country's entire grain-producing farmland within a year.

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Crops genetically engineered to express genes from the soil bacterium [Bacillus thuringiensis](#) are protected, without the need for broad-spectrum chemicals that may harm beneficial insects. Problem is, some fall armyworm strains have [developed tolerance](#) to that naturally occurring deterrent. The Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences has identified 21 chemical pesticides that could mitigate the caterpillar's spread and impact. [Early detection](#) is essential as the pest can only be effectively controlled with insecticides while larvae are small

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