

GMO crops could have slowed fall armyworm pest advance across China

A hungry caterpillar that ravages crops is advancing across China and threatening the nation's vast supply of maize. Scientists are investigating ways to minimize the damage caused by the invasive fall armyworm including experimenting with native predators that could keep the pest in check. Some researchers say that the insect's spread might have been slowed if the country grew genetically modified food crops.

The fall armyworm has spread around the world in the past few years, causing devastation of crops in parts of Africa and southern Asia.

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In some countries, such as Brazil, the pest has been managed by growing transgenic food crops that contain genes from the bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt). The genes offer crops resistance to the fall armyworm.

But Bt food crops have not been approved for commercial use in China, in part because of strong public opposition to genetically modified food, says Du Li, a specialist in biotechnology law at the University of Macau.

The growth of Bt maize across a large area of China would definitely have helped to control the pest, says Li Yunhe, a biotechnology researcher at the [Institute of Plant Protection].

Read full, original article: [Caterpillar's devastating march across China spurs hunt for native predator](#)