

Banana-destroying fungus hits South America. Is genetic engineering the solution?

A fungus that has wreaked havoc on banana plantations in the Eastern Hemisphere has, despite years of preventative efforts, arrived in the Americas.

ICA, the Colombian agriculture and livestock authority, confirmed that laboratory tests have positively identified the presence of so-called Panama disease Tropical Race 4 on banana farms in the Caribbean coastal region. The announcement was accompanied by a declaration of a national state of emergency.

The discovery of the fungus represents a potential impending disaster for bananas as both a food source and an export commodity. Panama disease Tropical Race 4—or TR4—is an infection of the banana plant by a fungus of the genus *Fusarium*. Although bananas produced in infected soil are not unsafe for humans, infected plants eventually stop bearing fruit.

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“Once you see it, it is too late, and it has likely already spread outside that zone without recognition,” says Gert Kema, Professor of Tropical Phytopathology at Wageningen University in the Netherlands whose lab analyzed soil samples to confirm TR4 in Colombia

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James Dale of the Queensland University of Technology in Australia—[is] testing genetically modified disease-resistant Cavendish bananas, but public acceptance of GMOs could prove a significant obstacle to their widespread adoption

Read full, original article: [The banana is one step closer to disappearing](#)