

Viewpoint: Why the USDA should approve GMO disease-resistant chestnut trees

You may [have] heard “chestnuts on an open fire” at Christmas but they are a lot of rarer than they once were. That is due to nature, and importation of a fungus that decimated 4,000,000,000 and caused this beautiful hardwood to disappear from eastern forests.

But after 28 years of research, an academic group solved the problem using a gene found in grains, strawberries, etc. It is completely harmless but prevents the tree from developing sores. It is nature fixing nature.

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In the [Wall Street Journal](#), I noted that it was now time to move past GMOs just for food and embrace the future of Genetically Rescued Organisms: Species that have been decimated by natural pests and that chemicals and older methods like manual breeding have been unable to save. One example is the American Chestnut tree, where 4,000,000,000 were lost due to blight, the [Cryphonectria parasitic fungus](#).

[Editor's note: [Hank Campbell](#) is the Founder of Science 2.0]

Genetic engineering can essentially give these at-risk plants a vaccine and this is a non-patented, blight-resistant American chestnut tree that simply uses a gene from bread wheat which produces an enzyme which keeps the fungus from forming cankers.

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