GM crops are not a ‘magic fix to climate change,’ but they are key to keeping us fed as temperatures rise

Future farmers face a big challenge: feeding everyone on Earth while being kind to the planet. Could genetically modified food be the answer?

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Around 20% of calories consumed across the world come from rice, and it is the main food source for three billion people. Yet the places where rice is most often grown, including areas of India, Bangladesh and China, are constantly at risk of flooding. Rising sea levels and increasingly intense tropical storms mean that this problem is only going to worsen.

One solution to this is scuba rice, which can withstand being soaked in flood water and has been successfully grown in southeast Asia.

Genetic modification can also make rice kinder to nature. Rice paddy fields are a big source of the greenhouse gas methane, but the creation of the SUSIBA2 variety is helping. This rice contains a gene from the barley plant, which can help to reduce methane emissions. A three-year trial showed that this method increased yield by 10% while reducing methane emissions.

There is no magic fix to climate change and no sure-fire way to make agriculture more sustainable, but GM crops are helping farmers to adapt to the issues presented by climate change.

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