

## Insect-resistant Bt eggplant recently approved in the Philippines could triple farmers' incomes

The most destructive insect pest that attacks the crop is called the eggplant fruit and shoot borer (EFSB). Scientifically, it is called *Leucinodes orbonalis*, a moth species prevalent in Asia and Africa. The moths' larvae feed on eggplant shoots and fruits until maturity.

"The EFSB can cause as much as 50-75 percent loss of fruits," said former Science Secretary Emil Q. Javier. "The worm of the insect bore tunnels in the fruit, rendering them unfit for consumption."

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"*Bt* [eggplant] was developed by genetically engineering a gene from the bacteria so that the genetically modified eggplants now produce a protein that defends it against insect attacks," explained Dr. Michael Purugganan, a Filipino plant geneticist who is the Dean of Science at the New York University.

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October 18, 2022, the government approved Bt eggplant as the third genetically engineered crop for commercial propagation, following Bt corn and golden rice (now known as Malusog rice).

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[One] study showed that a Bt eggplant farmer gets P50,330.00 net income for every P100,000.00 gross sales. In comparison, a net income of P16,880.00 is all a farmer gets who plant conventional varieties.

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