

Coming soon to a coffee bar near you: better coffee!

By ACSH Staff — September 9, 2014



Scientists have now unraveled and published the genome of a

variety of coffee plant called *Coffea canephora*, which comprises about 30 percent of the world's coffee production. Their hope is that this information will allow them to improve the plant's resistance to diseases in particular leaf rust, a disease that has been affecting many Central American plantations, according to an [account](#) ^[1] in *The Australian*.

The team that deciphered the coffee genome included an international group of researchers from France, the US, Italy, Canada, Germany, China, Spain, Indonesia, Brazil, Australia, and India, which speaks to the importance of coffee in global trade. According to the report, worldwide daily coffee consumption is over billion cups, and the coffee industry includes 25 million people in 62 countries.

While consumers will be most interested in genetic manipulations that improve the quality of their morning brew, the opportunity to improve the plants resistance to diseases will be most important to the agricultural community. Accordingly, Dr. Dani Zamir of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, one of the authors of the study, noted The challenge now is to translate these decoded genomes into new and improved tools for plant breeding.

ACSH's Dr. Ruth Kava added, While the expected benefits probably won't be seen in the immediate future, this research is just one more example of how decoding a plant's genome and using that information can lead to agricultural improvements. Other [improved crops such as golden rice](#) ^[2] and virus-resistant papayas have already been developed, and the papayas are on the market. This latest research may soon lead to better plants for growers, and a better cup of joe too.

ACSH's Dr. Josh Bloom says, People who are reflexively anti-GMO almost always because of phony scares should wake up and smell the coffee (boo!). This technology, which is feared for absolutely no good reason, is the wave of the future. What is encouraging is that the issue is becoming depoliticized, and people who were formerly anti-GMO are starting to come around and realize that the technology is not only something not to fear, but to be embraced.

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Links

[1] <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/coffee-genome-could-lead-to-better-brew-tougher-plants/story-e6frgcjx-1227049254477>

[2] <http://acsh.org/2014/05/case-golden-rice/>