

GM Oranges Containing Pig Genes in the Works

By: Ethan A. Huff, Natural News

Increasingly stricken by a disease that leaves them shriveled, discolored and sour, Florida oranges are the latest target for genetic manipulators who are right now working on a new variety of genetically modified (GM) orange that could end up containing pig genes. According to *The New York Times* (NYT), the disease, known as citrus greening, threatens the entire domestic orange industry, which is why some of Florida's largest citrus producers see no other option but to fund the development of GM oranges.

Southern Gardens Citrus (SGC), one of Florida's largest citrus growers and manager of some two-and-a-half million orange trees in south-central Florida, is at the forefront of the push for GM oranges. According to reports, the company recently tried to battle citrus greening in its own groves, chopping down and burning hundreds of thousands of infected trees and bolstering its arsenal of pesticides. But these efforts ultimately failed, prompting company officials to seek various alternative approaches.

When scouring the world for an orange variety immune to the disease proved fruitless, Ricke Kress, SGC's president, decided it might be time to take a more drastic approach. According to the NYT, Kress and his boss had previously mulled the idea of developing GMO oranges when citrus greening first showed up in the state but were reluctant to actually go through with it due to the long-term damage it might cause to the citrus industry. Now, however, Kress believes that the situation is far more serious.

Though he admits that Florida oranges could naturally develop their own resistance to the *C. Liberibacter asiaticus* bacterium, which is believed to be the cause of citrus greening, Kress is not necessarily keen on taking this risk. Natural resistance could take just a few months to develop, he says, or it could take years or even decades. In the meantime, Florida oranges could end up going extinct, leading to the loss of some 76,000 jobs in Florida and the end of bountiful orange juice cartons on grocery store shelves.

Like with pesticides, creating GM oranges will only compound the problem.

But is creating a GM orange really the answer? As SGC and other citrus growers already discovered by trying to eliminate citrus greening with more pesticides, nature has a way of eventually bypassing these man-made interventions and becoming more hostile. In the case of pesticides, harmful bacteria simply develop resistance to these chemicals over time, morphing into "superbugs" that are even more difficult to eliminate.

"Tons of pesticides were sprayed to try to keep these bacteria in check, but as the world has observed with multiple studies exposing the over-use of pesticides, this often makes the problem worse," explains a recent report by *Live Free, Live Natural*. "Instead of creating produce that is pest resistant, it is ravaged by superbugs created by special bacteria in their guts which make them impervious to the onslaught of Big Ag and Big Pharma chemicals."

The same will eventually be true for GM oranges, which will surely require the heavy application of pesticides and herbicides in order to grow. In time, these chemicals will lead to the emergence of not only superbugs but also "superweeds," which citrus farmers will ultimately lose the ability to contain with existing technologies. And the cycle will continue to perpetuate, leading to ever-worsening, long-term negative consequences for food production.

"The *C. liberibacter* bacteria have already cost Florida growers more than \$4.5 billion, but they are also one of the largest mono-cropping areas in the country, which requires millions of pounds of pesticides currently to grow any oranges at all," adds *Live Free, Live Natural*.

Sources for this article include:

<http://www.nytimes.com>

<http://livefreelivenatural.com>