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Scientists map watermelon genome



Watermelon breeding developments set to accelerate as scientists publish the fruit's genome sequence

An international consortium of scientists has mapped the watermelon genome paving the way for further breeding developments.

The findings were published in the influential science journal *Nature* and could help plant breeders improve nutrition, taste, and disease resistance.

Researchers found many of the fruit's disease resistant genes have been

lost through its domestication. It is hoped breeders can now recover some of these natural defences with the use of the genome sequence.

"Watermelons are an important cash crop and among the top five most consumed fresh fruits; however, cultivated watermelons have a very narrow genetic base, which presents a major bottleneck to its breeding. Decoding the complete genome of the watermelon and resequencing

watermelons from different subspecies provided a wealth of information and toolkits to facilitate research and breeding," said Zhangjun Fei, a scientist at the Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research at Cornell University, and one of the leaders of the project.