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Wild bananas could help overcome TR4



Indonesian varieties tested by a research team at Wageningen have shown signs of resistance to the disease

Wild bananas from Indonesia may hold the genetic key to unlocking resistance to TR4, the fungal disease that threatens to wipe out the world's most widely produced and consumed banana variety, Cavendish.

As reported on German television channel WDR's science programme Quarks & Co earlier this week, a team of scientists at Wageningen University in the Netherlands is leading the charge

when it comes to identifying alternative varieties of banana that might potentially be resistant to TR4.

According to Professor Gert Kema, who heads up the research team, the project is now in the process of analysing around 200 different varieties and recently tested wild Indonesian bananas that showed resistance.

Although the varieties themselves are said to be inedible – mainly because they are so small and their seeds grow big and

hard – Kema said their resistant characteristics might ultimately be identified, isolated and used to produce consumable bananas that can fight off the disease.

"We know already that it's not many genes," commented Kema. "It's one or two genes that we're looking for. So, we're curious to find out what type of genes they are."