

## **SIMPLE TECHNIQUE HOLDS PROMISE FOR INCREASING CROP YIELDS**

According to a study reported in the New York Times, Chinese rice farmers were able to protect their crops from disease and vastly increase yields by relying on a simple principle of biodiversity. By planting their fields with two varieties of rice—one known to be vulnerable to disease and one found to be resistant—the farmers were able to prevent an air-borne fungus from spreading without having to apply costly chemical fungicides. The results were particularly exciting for organic farming interests and opponents of genetic engineering.

Scientists saw potential for the technique to be applied beyond rice farming to other disease-prone crops. Experiments with diversifying coffee species have already begun in Colombia, and the implications could be important for other staple crops, such as corn in Mesoamerica and potatoes and wheat in South America.

See the full text of this article at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/library/national/science/082200sci-gm-rice.html>