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Biofortified crops to alleviate micronutrient malnutrition

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Micronutrient malnutrition affects more than half of the world population, particularly in developing countries. Concerted international and national fortification and supplementation efforts to curb the scourge of micronutrient malnutrition are showing a positive impact, alas without reaching the goals set by international organizations. Biofortification, the delivery of micronutrients via micronutrient-dense crops, offers a cost-effective and sustainable approach, complementing these efforts by reaching rural populations. Bioavailable micronutrients in the edible parts of staple crops at concentrations high enough to impact on human health can be obtained through breeding, provided that sufficient genetic variation for a given trait exists, or through transgenic approaches. Research and breeding programs are underway to enrich the major food staples in developing countries with the most important micronutrients: iron, provitamin A, zinc and folate.

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