



Nutrition and Health

PHOTO: USDA

Scientists Across the Country Working to Create More Nutrient-Dense Diets

Many American diets don't include enough basic nutrients, which can lead to health issues as we age. Low-nutrient diet lead to issues, including macular degeneration, Alzheimer's disease, obesity and diabetes. Improving the nutritional quality of basic crops through plant breeding is a cost-effective, sustainable way to address these nutritional needs. Researchers at land-grant universities across the country are seeking ways to make the foods we eat each day more nutrient-dense, for life-long health and wellness.

Here are a few examples of that work:

- Sweet corn, one of the most commonly eaten vegetables in the U.S., is a natural target for micronutrient biofortification. Scientists in **New York** are working to incorporate more carotenoids into this crop. Carotenoids are key for delaying onset of age-related macular degeneration, a leading cause of irreversible blindness in the elderly.
- Researchers in **Louisiana** found a way to lower the high glycemic index while also raising the protein content of rice, a staple food across the world. This new rice variety provides possible solutions to two major health issues – diabetes and obesity.
- In **New Mexico**, scientists also are exploring adding carotenoids, this time to chile peppers, to aid in slowing the progression of Alzheimer's in addition to promoting eye health. Their goal is to find exciting dietary sources of these micronutrients, for use in food products such as salsa and enchilada sauces.

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