

Colombia develops biostimulant to accelerate banana growth

Colombian researchers have developed a product they say increases banana biomass and can accelerate the growing period by four to six weeks.

Colombian Banana Growers Union's (Augura) Center for Banana Research (Cenibanano) scientists first began to develop the product with a collection of microorganisms found in key banana-growing areas.

Augura-Cenibanano phytosanitary researcher Luz Argel said the team had gathered bacteria from growth-promoting rhizobacteria (PGPR) endospores, which colonize plant roots and promote plant growth.

"Some 1,400 bacteria were gathered and then they were scanned to see if they could boost growth. After this filter, the strains that showed the best potential were evaluated in vitro in order to later take them to test farms," he said.

Five strains were selected for greenhouse trials, during which the researchers analyzed which had the most significant effect.

"We got some very interesting results – one of the strains performed very well in reducing the growth period for bananas," Argel said.

The creation of the biostimulant, which has been patented by Augura, is expected to provide economic benefits to growers by cutting down the ripening process by four to six weeks and boosting annual production.

For the moment the fertilizer has only been applied to new seedlings, and research is still yet to be carried out to see what effect the biostimulant has on mature plants.

The product has not yet been released commercially as its creators are still assessing which entity would be best to produce it on a large-scale..

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