

Cherry farmers look to 'gene drive' technology to kill fruit flies

The spotted-wing drosophila, a type of fruit fly native to Asia, has become the bane of California's cherry farms since it first appeared there in 2008. Rather than lay eggs in rotting berries, the invasive species punches holes in fruit that's still ripening. The costs to U.S. agriculture: about 700 million dollars a year.

When the pests arrived a decade ago, the orchards started spraying insecticides, killing the flies and pretty much every other insect, including bees.

The geneticliteracyproject.org reports on a way for the Californian cherry growers to get rid of just the flies, and cheaply. It's a technology developed by geneticists: a "gene drive" that can spread DNA alterations among the flies, potentially killing them off.

Scientists at the University of California, Riverside, have installed a gene drive in the invasive pest, the first time the technology has been established in a commercially important species.

Lien article : <http://www.freshplaza.com/article/186592/Cherry-farmers-look-to-gene-drive-technology-to-kill-fruit-flies>