

USDA approves rice with human genes

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A California biotechnology company has been given preliminary approval by U.S. Agriculture Department to plant rice that contains human genes.

Ventria Bioscience says the rice, which will be planted on 3,000 acres in Kansas, is endowed with human genes that produce human proteins, including bacteria-fighting compounds found in breast milk and saliva, The Washington Post reported.

The newspaper said the proteins would be extracted for use as an anti-diarrhea medicine.

A company-sponsored study in Peru found that children with severe diarrhea recovered faster when the salty fluids they were prescribed contained the proteins.

Critics fear the genes could escape the plants and turn up in other foods, the report said.

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