

Bioengineer Ray Wu dead at 79

February 25 2008

Ray Wu, a biochemist and genetic engineer who led research into genetically modified crops and environmental stress, died in New York at the age of 79.

Wu introduced genes isolated from other sources into rice cells to induce the plants to develop proteins that would make them stronger and more resistance to environmental stress, The New York Times said Monday.

Researchers at Cornell University, where Wu conducted the research, said the genetically modified rice could someday be crossed with native strains to produce more viable and stronger yielding crops.

He began his research in the 1970s by introducing artificial genetic codes into bacteria, prompting them to display a trait normally not seen in the bacteria.

Wu did research in at the Public Health Research Institute of the City of New York from 1955 to 1966 and later joined the faculty at Cornell, serving as the chairman of biochemistry, molecular and cell biology at Cornell from 1976-78, the Times said.

He also served as an adviser to the governments of China and Taiwan.

Wu is survived by his wife of 52 years, a son and a daughter, his brother and sister and four grandchildren.

He died of heart failure Feb. 10 in Ithaca, N.Y.

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