

A team at the University of Queensland is taking the next step in their search for a banana that resists the global scourge of Panama disease, website [The Land](#) reports.

Led by Professor James Dale, they have already produced a genetically modified Cavendish that can stand up to tropical race 4 - the worst form of the soil-borne fungal disease.

Their work caught the attention of US firm Fresh Del Monte, who have now chipped in research money to take its resistance to another level - this time tweaking the DNA code of an ordinary banana with a pair of tiny gene snips, in a process known by its acronym CRISPR.

"While our success in developing a disease-resistant genetically modified line of Cavendish is a world-first achievement, this funding will enable us to develop the next generation of TR4 resistant Cavendish bananas," Professor Dale said.

Early work will assist the team moving forward.

He said the field trials showed high expression of a gene derived from a wild banana provided resistance to TR4 disease.

"Although (this gene) is also present in Cavendish it is not expressed."

Gene snipping might fix that.

Panama Disease has spread around the globe, probably carried illegally on plants, in their soil. In the Philippines the disease has caused widespread issues with production. Parts of the Middle East, Israel, Jordan and Mozambique are infected.

Most recently, in 2019, the disease was found for the first time in Colombia. South America as a region produces 85 percent of export bananas.