RNAi, or “RNA Interference,” is a natural process that occurs in the cells of plants, animals, and people.

Inside the nucleus of each cell is a detailed genetic blueprint, encoded in DNA...

...which is transcribed (copied) into messenger RNA (mRNA) ...

...which gets translated by the cell's machinery to make a specific protein.

Proteins are the building blocks of tissues and they carry out many essential biological functions. In some cases, decreasing the production of specific proteins can be beneficial. RNAi is a natural process that works like a “dimmer switch” to dial down the level of a protein. It likely evolved to protect cells from viruses.

HOW DOES RNAi WORK?

1. It begins when a form of RNA made of two strands (double-stranded RNA, or dsRNA) is introduced into the cell, for example by a virus, or produced in the cell.
2. When a cell “sees” dsRNA, it activates structures that work like scissors to cut it up.
3. Next, other structures attach to these small pieces of RNA and turn them back into single-stranded RNA.
4. These structures then bind to mRNA with a matching code.
5. As a result, production of the protein encoded by that mRNA is prevented.

When we know the gene that encodes a certain protein, we can use RNAi to target that protein and dial it down in a highly specific way. In agriculture, for example, this can potentially impact the production of proteins responsible for the development of a disease or essential for a pest’s survival, thus protecting plants from such disease or pest infestations.
RNA-based products applied on or around plants have the potential to:

- **Help prevent infestations by targeting pest development.**
- **Provide direct protection from pests**
- **Prolong the efficacy of other pest-control methods by limiting pests’ resistance.**
- **Help prevent infestations by targeting pest development.**

**PLANTS**

RNA-based technology in plants has the potential to:

- Provide **resistance to viruses, pests, and diseases**
- Prevent **spoilage** and food waste (e.g., browning and bruising)
- Increase **nutritional value**
- Reduce **specific compounds** such as caffeine in crops

**CROP-PROTECTION PRODUCTS**

RNA-based products applied on or around plants have the potential to:

- Provide **direct protection** from pests
- **Prolong the efficacy** of other pest-control methods by limiting pests’ resistance.
- Help prevent **infestations** by targeting pest development.

Gene is inserted into the plant DNA that encodes a particular form of RNA...

...which leads to dialed down production of a specific target protein in the plant or pest.

dsRNA is applied to the crop and ingested by a pest. The dsRNA is absorbed into the pest’s cells...

...where it specifically dials down production of a target protein in the pest.

These are not the only ways RNAi can be used in agriculture. Numerous RNA-based plant products are already approved, and other promising products targeting the plant or pest are currently in development.