

According to a low- and a high-impact scenario, implementing folate-biofortified rice in China would save, respectively, 116,090 and 257,345 DALYs per year. The health benefits of folate-enriched rice in China are based on daily folate intakes that are significantly higher than the recommended intake of 400 µg to tackle maternal folate deficiency and the associated risk of having a baby with an NTD caused by folate deficiency. Although rice consumption and daily folate intake in the northern regions are generally lower than in the south, the required daily folate intake can still be achieved if folate-biofortified rice is consumed. This explains the higher number of DALYs saved in high NTD risk regions, such as northeast and northwest China.

The findings support folate biofortification of rice as a valuable strategy to reduce folate deficiency and its main adverse health outcome, NTDs. Especially in poor, rural regions where other interventions have little chance of success, folate-biofortified rice seems to be an effective, complementary approach to address folate deficiency.

To further improve the evaluation of the health benefits of folate-biofortified staple crops, research is needed to determine the nonlinear relationship between folate deficiency and NTDs and the contribution of folate deficiency to other health outcomes.

If folate-biofortified rice were to obtain approval, further thought would be needed as to the optimal method for its introduction in rural China. A possible scenario would be to cross the high-folate trait into rice varieties that have improved agronomic characteristics, such as the pest-resistant *Bt* rice, to ensure acceptance of farmers and politicians. Besides political approval, the success of folate biofortification in China will be mainly determined by the acceptance of consumers, the cost effectiveness of this intervention and the price of folate-biofortified rice.

Even though folate biofortification is a pro-poor and pro-rural intervention, it is only one of many approaches for alleviating the burden of folate deficiency. A combination of policy interventions will probably be most feasible and effective in tackling folate deficiency in all sections of the population.

Note: Supplementary information is available on the *Nature Biotechnology* website.

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#### COMPETING FINANCIAL INTERESTS

The authors declare no competing financial interests.

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## Alive and kicking

### To the Editor:

As CEO of the companies involved, I would like to bring to the attention of your readers several inaccuracies in a News article in the March issue entitled ‘Resuscitated deCODE refocuses on diagnostics’<sup>1</sup>. The article erroneously reports that deCODE (Reykjavik, Iceland) “...already shuttered its Emerald Biosciences and Emerald Biostructures drug discovery operations in Bainbridge Island, Washington...” In fact, both Emerald BioSystems (which was misspelled as Emerald Biosciences in the original story) and Emerald BioStructures have never closed—they are vibrant, growing businesses.

Both companies have been continuously operating since 1998 with the same management team. On November 13, 2009, they were sold to a group of investors in Delaware (Beryllium). Emerald BioSystems continues to sell research products for protein crystallization (<http://www.emeraldbiosystems.com/>) and Emerald BioStructures—which before deCODE’s bankruptcy, operated under the name ‘deCODE biostructures’—provides collaborative structural biology services to pharmaceutical companies, biotech companies and academic institutions ([\[www.emeraldbiostructures.com/\]\(http://www.emeraldbiostructures.com/\)\).](http://</a></p>
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The two companies also remain active in the Protein Structure Initiative (<http://www.structuralgenomics.org/>). Emerald BioStructures is the lead organization for the National Institutes of General

Medical Sciences–funded Accelerated Technologies Center for Gene to 3D Structure (<http://www.ATCG3D.org/>) specialized center, and Emerald BioSystems is actively commercializing technologies generated from this center. Emerald BioStructures is also a member of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases–funded Seattle Structural Genomics

Center for Infectious Disease (<http://www.SSGCID.org/>), which is solving hundreds of structures of novel anti-infective disease targets every year.

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The author declares competing financial interests: details accompany the full-text HTML version of the paper at <http://www.nature.com/naturebiotechnology/>.

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