

Laser fence aims to protect crops from rats and other pests

10/28/2016

Posted by Gail Overton

Senior Editor

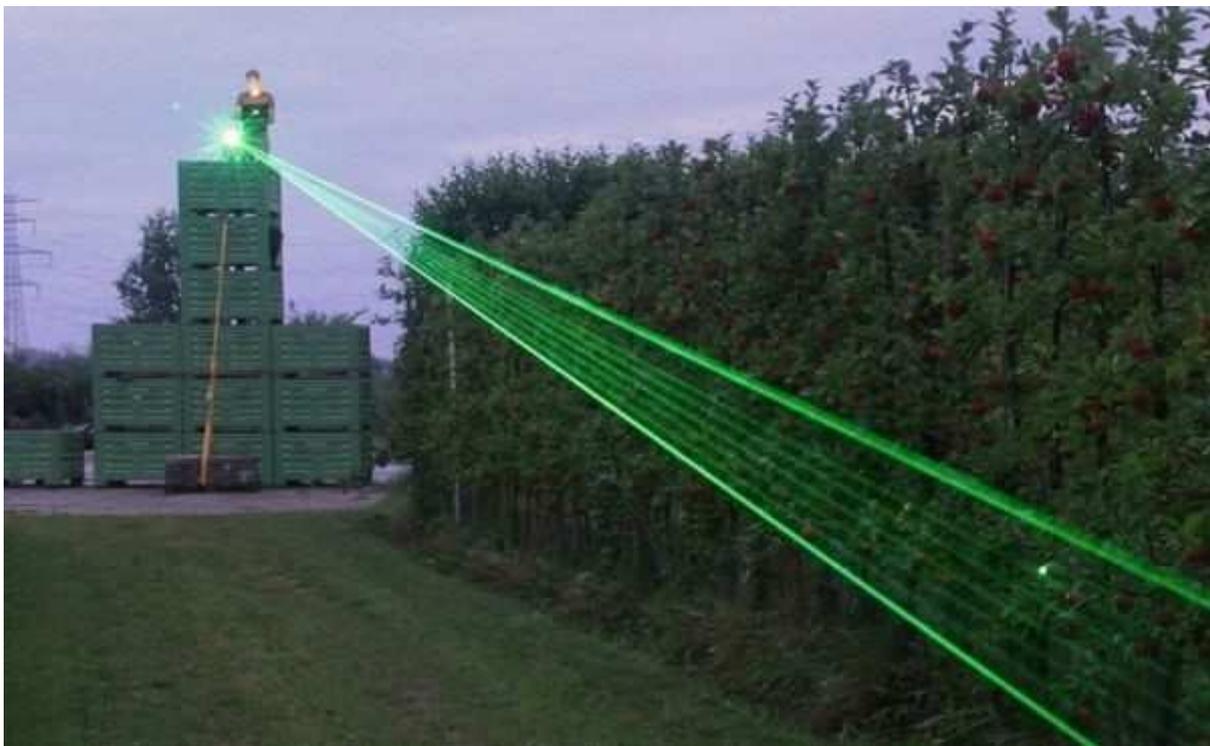


IMAGE: The European Commission is funding a trial to see if a laser can scare rats and other rodents from crops in order to eliminate harmful poisons. (Image credit: BBC)

In a trial funded by the European Commission (EC), researchers at Liverpool John Moores University (Liverpool, England) hope a "fence" of laser light will [scare rats and other pests](#), proving an alternative to poison. The trials will take place in Scotland, the Netherlands, and Spain starting in late 2016. The National Farmers' Union (NFU) said innovation was important to support the farming industry following Brexit.

RELATED ARTICLE: ['Photonic Fence' zaps mosquitoes with a laser](#)

"The laser has already been produced," Alex Mason, project coordinator of the Life Laser Fence project, told the BBC. The EC contributed \$1.85 million dollars to support the research. "It's a commercial product used in a number of situations--but we are looking at using it in

agricultural situations, on a wider range of species. It already works very well on birds. We hope it will work on rats, badgers, foxes and rabbits too."

The Agrilaser Autonomic is sold as a device that repels birds, which "perceive the approaching laser beam as a physical danger" and fly away, according to the manufacturer. The researchers hope it will work just as well on other unwanted animals that can destroy crops, eat food meant for farm animals, and spread disease.

Controlling pests with poisons can lead to unintended victims such as birds being killed too, so the trial hopes to reduce crop damage in the trial areas by 50%, while reducing bird exposure to pesticide by 80%.

Helen Ferrier, chief science adviser of the NFU, said, "Continuing support and funding of the agri-tech sector is vital in ensuring British science and innovation can reach more farm businesses. Agri-tech can enable the British farming industry to become more efficient, reduce our waste, provide tools to manage volatility and a fair, transparent, and functioning supply chain. An agri-tech sector we can rely on is extremely important in the face of potential political and economic changes in the next five to 10 years which could severely impact the farming industry."

SOURCE: BBC; <http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-37775605>
