

Science test: Potatoes can be grown on Mars

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This information is not only useful for surviving the life of the first colonists living on Mars, but also helping to reduce hunger here on Earth, where 1 in 9 people suffer. malnutrition because of lack of food.



It is possible that recent research has helped us answer one of the important questions about bringing people to Mars to live. That is: " *What to eat on Mars?* ".

Based on the ancient spirit, every time people explore new lands, the first thing to consider is to improve the land for cultivation, animal husbandry, and provide life-sustaining food. And of course, the planet Mars is no exception. But what kind of seed can we bring from the Earth to grow on Mars?

To investigate this issue, the *International Potato Center (CIP)* recently embarked on a project called " *Growing Potatoes on Mars* ". The inspiration of this project came from a scene in the movie " *The Martian - People From Mars* ", in which the main character was played by Matt Damon who planted potatoes on Mars to survive. However, it is only a scene in a science fiction film, and the truth remains to be studied thoroughly. Therefore, the International Potato Association - CIP and NASA research agency Ames Research Center (*ARC*) have embarked on experiments to find out if we can grow potatoes in cashew. Martian environmental conditions or not.



The experimental environment is located at a **CubeSat** satellite block - an international program designed by engineers at the *University of Engineering and Technology (UTEC)*. Potato soil is taken from the desert of Pampas de La Joya, in southern Peru - described as a land similar to that of Mars. The researchers simulated radiation in Mars with LED lights, built a day and night orbiting temperature controller on it, as well as adjusting air pressure, oxygen density and carbon dioxide. research team made.

Results obtained after a relatively positive month. " *We are quite surprised to see that the potatoes we grow can germinate, as well as grow new potatoes in such harsh environmental conditions,* " said Walter Amoros, a member of CIP. share.

However, CIP's experiment not only helps us realize that most likely, the first astronauts on Earth to set foot on Mars in the next decade will use potatoes as their main food source. Moreover, the experiment also showed that potatoes could survive even when the Earth's environmental conditions became increasingly severe. " *This study has a significant technical and biological impact on the Earth,* " said Chris McKay from NASA ARC in a press conference.

By demonstrating that potatoes can be grown in even the most extreme areas on Earth, this research experiment will likely contribute significantly to solving the current malnutrition, estimated. about 10% of the population is suffering. This situation will become much more ominous in the future and therefore need to be addressed promptly.

" *Experimental results show that our efforts in cultivating crops that have the potential to improve food security in regions have been and will be adversely affected by the transformation. climate is happening on Earth* "- Mr. Amoros added.

And potatoes are likely to be a " *superfood* " at both the Earth, as well as Mars in the future.

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