

Burning chillis drive elephants away from African farmers' crops

By [Thin Lei Win](#)

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Burning bricks made of dry chilli, dung and water could stop endangered elephants raiding crops in Africa and Asia, reducing conflicts with farmers trying to secure harvests to feed their families, experts said on Wednesday.



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Resin from crushed dry chillies irritates elephants' trunks, acting as a repellent, said a study in northern Botswana, published in the journal *Oryx*. "This is an excellent non-lethal and low-cost opportunity for local farmers to keep elephants away from their crops," Rocío Pozo, a researcher at the University of Oxford, said in a statement.

The findings could help to protect elephants, whose population in Africa has plummeted in the last decade due to ivory poaching.

Lines of chillis could be used to separate farms from elephant paths, teaching the animals which routes were safe to use, said Anna Songhurst, director of the Botswana-based Ecoexist and co-author of the study.

Reduce human-elephant conflicts

Botswana has the largest population of African elephants, and in the eastern Okavango Panhandle, where Ecoexist works, an equal number of animals and humans - 15,000 of each - compete over water, food and land.

"For an individual farmer, their whole year's supply of food for the whole family could be destroyed in just one night," Songhurst told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone.

The study is part of a wider strategy to reduce human-elephant conflicts, including providing food security for the animals as well as humans, she added.

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