



Partnership
for Aflatoxin
Control in Africa

Partenariat pour
la lutte contre
l'aflatoxine en Afrique

Parceria para o
Controle da
Aflatoxina em África

الشراكة من أجل مكافحة
الافلاتوكسين في أفريقيا



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

CTA and the Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA) launch a working paper on Improving the Evidence Base on Aflatoxin Contamination and Exposure in Africa

21 November 2016, Wageningen – Aflatoxins are one of the major ‘silent’ threats to the African continent’s food supply. A new report points the way to fighting aflatoxin contamination and reducing exposure levels.

Aflatoxins are highly poisonous compounds produced by the *Aspergillus* fungus, which occur in soil. Several of the food crops grown in Africa, such as cassava, chili, groundnuts, maize, rice, sorghum, teff, and major cash crops such as coffee, cocoa, tea and sugarcane have been found to be contaminated with these dangerous toxins. They have also been found in processed foods such as peanut butter and foods from animal sources like egg and milk.

Aflatoxins cause cancers in humans and animals. According to the International Agency for Research on Cancer, aflatoxin B1 is the most potent natural carcinogen so far known. About 26,000 Africans living south of the Sahara die of liver cancer every year through chronic aflatoxin exposure.

Because of their potency and the wide range of commodities they affect, aflatoxins pose serious risks to human health, agricultural production and trade.

On 21 November 2016, as part of its increased focus on aflatoxin mitigation for improving nutrition outcomes in Africa, the [Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Co-operation ACP-EU \(CTA\)](#) and the African Union Commission’s [Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa \(PACA\)](#) launched a working paper entitled [Improving the Evidence Base on Aflatoxin Contamination and Exposure in Africa: Strengthening the Agriculture-Nutrition Nexus](#). The report is the result of a study commissioned by CTA and PACA in 2015 and is based on a detailed review of over 800 references in the published literature led by Professor Sheila Okoth of the University of Nairobi.

“Aflatoxins can be produced anytime and anywhere along the food and feed value chains. The presence of aflatoxins in food and feed have adversely affected the health of the population and the ability of the continent to trade with the rest of the world,” said Prof. Okoth.” **Professor at the University of Nairobi, Kenya**

A substantial body of knowledge is available on the aflatoxin challenge that plagues African farmers, other agri-entrepreneurs and governments, but it is not being put into practice.

Judith Francis, CTA's Senior Programme Coordinator, Science and Technology Policy stated, *“The report demonstrates that there is enough evidence to support joint action to solve the aflatoxin problem but key stakeholders do not seem to be receiving or are not sufficiently exposed to this evidence-based information, despite the significant research that has been carried out so far in the continent.”*

Significant investments have been made by the research, academic and donor communities and a range of technologies and interventions have been developed and piloted. The report demonstrates that no single technology or intervention is enough to fight the aflatoxin issue in Africa. The challenge of controlling aflatoxin contamination persists, with continued negative impacts on human health, agri-businesses, trade and socio-economic development, despite the vast knowledge base. Further research and investment need to be better coordinated and farmers, consumers and governments engaged as key stakeholders in promoting good practices, to achieve greater impact in controlling aflatoxin. Priority should be given to building farmer's capacity in adopting such good practices in agriculture and post-harvest management and manufacturers' (micro, small and medium) in good manufacturing practices.

The CTA/PACA report also shows that national regulations to govern aflatoxin contamination are pre-requisites for success in containing the threat. And enforcing regulations at every stage of a commodity's value chain though difficult, given the small-scale farming systems and informal markets and trade that are so common on the continent, must be comprehensively addressed. The ideal situation is for the continental partners to agree on and apply stringent standards for controlling aflatoxins in food and feed and jointly enforce the regulations. Harmonising regional policies and aligning them with those of international trading partners such as the European Union will not only enhance regional trade but increase access to international markets. This must be backed up by sampling and testing of foods available in local markets and for export, as is the case in developed countries.

Amare Ayalew, Program Manager, PACA Secretariat at African Union Commission stated; *“Aflatoxin contamination is complex, occurring in wide ranging commodities and influenced by a diverse array of factors. Effective management requires wholesale change and is knowledge intensive. Joint public and private investment is key to support holistic actions for aflatoxin mitigation with greater impact. A multi-actor, multi-pronged approach is needed from farm to fork, pre-production to postharvest, marketing and distribution supported by an enabling policy, regulatory and institutional framework, including laboratory infrastructure, public education and adequate financial and trained human resources”*

The report concludes that building up laboratory infrastructure to conform to international standards, though costly, will expand market opportunities for African farmers, traders, processors and other value chain actors. And building new and strengthening existing strategic partnerships including with the private sector who are already engaged in good practices such as self-regulation to ensure the quality and safety of the food and feed supplied in

local and regional markets will contribute to achieving greater impact in controlling aflatoxin contamination in the continent.

The full report is available here:

http://publications.cta.int/media/publications/downloads/1975_PDF.pdf

For more info about CTA's work, please visit: <http://www.cta.int/en/>

For more information about PACA's work, please visit:

aflatoxinpartnership.org

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About PACA:

The Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA) is a flagship program of the African Union Commission. It is established as an Innovative partnership. It is on a mission to support agricultural development, safeguard consumer health and facilitate trade by catalyzing, coordinating and increasing effective aflatoxin control along agricultural value chains in Africa. PACA is guided by a multi-stakeholder Steering Committee led by the AUC. It has a Secretariat based at the AUC Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. PACA works with country governments directly while forging strong partnerships with diverse stakeholders to achieve systemic change in aflatoxin control in Africa. PACA invites stakeholders to collaborate toward a common vision of "an Africa free from the harmful effects of aflatoxins".

About CTA:

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) is a joint international institution of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the European Union (EU). Its mission is to advance food and nutritional security, increase prosperity and encourage sound natural resource management in ACP countries. It provides access to information and knowledge, facilitates policy dialogue and strengthens the capacity of agricultural and rural development institutions and communities.

CTA operates under the framework of the Cotonou Agreement and is funded by the EU.

For more information on CTA, visit www.cta.int