

## MYCOTOXINS: A FOOD SECURITY THREAT – THE AFRICAN STORY

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Mycotoxins are secondary metabolites produced by some fungi with typical examples being *Aspergillus* spp, *Fusarium* spp, *Penicillium* spp. Mycotoxins have been implicated as the cause of many health conditions such as cancer, mutagenicity, as well as estrogenic, gastrointestinal and kidney disorders. Some mycotoxins are immunosuppressive thereby reducing resistance to infectious diseases. Mycotoxins contaminate crops which are eaten directly by man and those fed to animals. In Africa the climatic conditions coupled with poor agricultural practices are such that favour the growth of these toxin producing fungi. This paper gives a survey of some these practices and how they contribute to fungal growth and mycotoxin contamination of food and feed stuff with attendant huge economic loss to farmers. Also included in this review is a survey of the dwindling food resources and rejection of produce at the export markets due to the menace of mycotoxins. Efforts are being geared towards reducing the problems of mycotoxin contamination through awareness campaigns to farmers, traders and other stakeholders in many African countries. Some agronomic practices used to reduce mycotoxin effects in parts of Africa are also revealed. It is therefore suggested that more efforts should be put in place to reduce food security threats.

Keywords: Africa, fungi, mycotoxins, food security

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