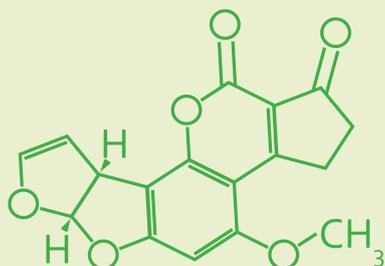


# aflatoxin questions

## 1. What are aflatoxins?

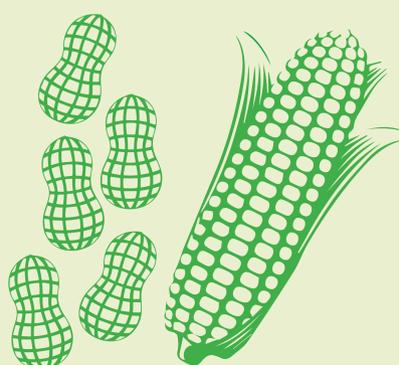
Aflatoxins are natural poisons produced when certain mold species (*Aspergillus flavus* and *Aspergillus parasiticus*) grow in foods.



Aflatoxin B<sub>1</sub> is recognized as one of the most potent naturally occurring carcinogenic substances.

## 2. What types of food are most likely to be contaminated?

Maize, peanuts, dried spices and tree nuts are the most likely foods to contain aflatoxins.



## 3. Which countries are most affected?

The aflatoxin-producing *Aspergillus* species grow best in tropical climates.



## 4. At what stage along the food chain does contamination occur?

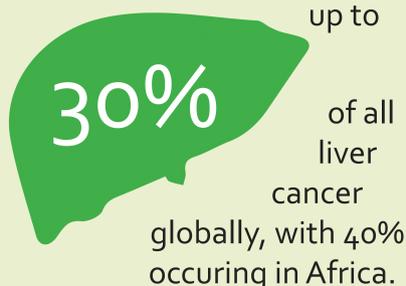
The *Aspergillus* fungus can produce aflatoxins during the pre-harvest, harvesting, handling, storage, processing and transport stages of the food chain if conditions are favorable.



## 5. What are the impacts on human health?

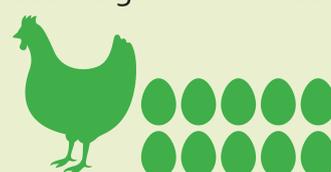
Long-term chronic exposure to aflatoxin consumption can result in liver cancer and immune suppression, and stunting in children. Exposure to high levels can be fatal.

Aflatoxins could contribute up to



## 6. Are there any effects in livestock?

In livestock, aflatoxins can cause weight loss and death.



Chickens fed contaminated feed lay 70% less eggs than those on normal diets.

## 7. What are the impacts on trade?

Africa loses an estimated US\$670 million in rejected export trade annually due to contamination by aflatoxins.



## 8. Are aflatoxins destroyed during cooking or processing?

Aflatoxins are not destroyed by normal food processing practices, such as fermenting, boiling, cooking or baking.



## 9. What are the potential mitigation measures?



Biological control and good agricultural practices



Dietary diversification



Good post-harvest practices



Food regulations

## 10. What is PACA doing to promote an Africa free from the harmful effects of aflatoxins?

PACA is coordinating and supporting aflatoxin management across Africa's health, agriculture and trade sectors, and supporting country-led evidence generation, action planning, implementation and tracking along selected value chains in Africa.

