

## Talking Biotech: GM corn blocks carcinogenic aflatoxins, could eliminate ‘chronic health concern’ in developing world

Aflatoxins are trace compounds produced by certain fungi, and represent a legitimate food safety risk. These fungi grow on corn, peanuts and other crops, especially in warm, humid areas that lack fungal control measures. They have been connected to numerous human diseases, primarily liver cancer, but also cause problems in livestock fed contaminated grain.

Dr. Monica Schmidt of the University of Arizona has a good solution. Her team has expressed an RNA sequence in corn that matches the genetic sequence in the fungus. Upon invasion, the fungus takes up the RNA from the corn, and it shuts down the genes required for aflatoxin production. There are no effects on the corn kernel itself. This work shows that safer food could be produced by arming the plant with genetic defenses it could implement in fighting fungal contamination and the toxins it produces.

[Dr. Schmidt's lab website](#)

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