

## Insect-resistant, GM, Bt corn could help Kenya keep cancer-causing mycotoxins out of its food supply

[The Kenyan] Agriculture and Food Authority (AFA) slapped a ban on maize imports from Uganda and Tanzania, saying tests on the maize had revealed high levels of mycotoxins “that are consistently beyond safety limits.”

Mycotoxins, particularly aflatoxins, have posed a raging threat to food security, livelihoods and human life in the country. Aflatoxin is a toxic fungal metabolite that is classified as a Group I carcinogen and which occurs naturally in maize and a number of other cereal foods. It is known to cause liver cancer in humans, as well as immune system dysfunction, and growth impairment in humans and animals.

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Advances in biotechnology have presented a viable solution to the nagging problem of aflatoxin, with experts citing Bt maize as a strong candidate.

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In addition to improved yields and reduced insect damage, the end result is improved maize grain quality making it less exposed to fungus or moulds that cause aflatoxin.

“In East Europe, levels of mycotoxins were significantly lower in Bt maize than in conventional maize. The TELA Bt maize reduces the need for sprayed insecticides, making the process of farming maize much safer for farmers, consumers and the environment,” [says Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization’s Dr. Mwimali Murenga.]

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