Managing aflatoxins in maize before and during harvest

Different ideas to protect maize from aflatoxins help farmers before and during harvest.

Aflatoxins are unhealthy for people and animals. If you feed your animals with food that is affected by aflatoxins, their productivity will be lower and the milk, eggs and meat can transmit aflatoxins to us. Considering a longer term of eating aflatoxins, it attacks the liver and kidneys.

Moulds that produce aflatoxins

Moulds which are living in the ground and feed from plant crop can develop the poison aflatoxin. The wind spread the sprouts of these moulds, which can land on the silk threads of the maize ear. Afterwards, they grow into the kernels where the aflatoxins develop.

Maize is more likely to be attacked when the temperature is hot. Young maize suffers most from drought.

Protecting maize from moulds

It is important to start planting soon enough, to avoid that your plants die because of droughts. When you plant your maize, grow some pulses, like pigeon pea, next to it.

Fertilizer is important to keep the soil moisture. Cutting leftovers can also stay on the field, to make the harvest suffer less. Therefore, the plants are growing stronger and are more resistant against moulds. If your soil is crooked, use contour bounds to keep the moisture.

As soon as the maize is ripe start harvesting. You should do this by sun, because otherwise moulds could develop in the

harvested wet maize. After removing the husk, the ears should directly be stored in a bag, to avoid contact with the soil. Remove and burn every attacked maize.