

Managing aflatoxins in maize during drying and storage

To have a good harvest, it is important to know how to protect maize from aflatoxins after the harvest.

Dried and stored maize can develop moulds. These moulds produce a poison which is called Aflatoxin. Aflatoxins affect our health. Therefore, humans and animals should not eat affected grains. If you feed your animals with mouldy grain, the poison end up in the milk, eggs and meat and can be transmitted to people.

Mouldy grain

If you husk the maize before it's completely dried, the maize structure breaks and moisture can soak in. If the maize is moist, aflatoxins can easily settle down. That's why it is very important, that you always fully dry your harvest before storing. But even while storing, moulds can lay in the ground and affect the maize. You have to check the maize precisely, because often moulds are hiding in the maize and aren't visible at first sight.

Drying and storing maize

Already sort out discoloured maize during the harvest. If just one part of the maize is affected, destroy just this part.

When you husked the maize you should always keep it away from rain. Therefore, you lay down the maize on a clean tarpaulin, mat or platform. Leave it there for several weeks. You should regularly turn the maize and cover it by night. After the kernels loosening during the turning process, you know that they are completely dry.

To make sure that every single kernel has dried, you lay the

kernels on your tarpaulin again. Make sure that the layer is lower than half a finger. Let it leave for another few days.

In the meantime you have to stir the maize every hour. Always be careful that in this process the kernels doesn't get wet.

If you want to make sure that the maize is ready to store, you can use the "salt and bottle method". If the maize has dried, store it in a clean, airtight space, which always should be off the ground.