

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **IITA moves to commercialize and disseminate first aflatoxin biocontrol products to Africa's farmers**

*...flags off project to ensure aflasafe products reach farmers' hands.*

African farmers will soon have a product that would ensure safer food for their families and communities. A natural product called aflasafe that can reduce contamination from aflatoxin, a silent killer, would be made available in at least 11 countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Following the success of aflasafe— the first indigenous biocontrol innovation for the prevention of aflatoxin contamination on the fields and store houses of maize and groundnut farmers in Africa, the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) is now set to enable commercialization of the technology, to ensure that farmers in need of the product would have access to it.

More than 4.5 billion people in the developing world are exposed to aflatoxins, carcinogenic poisons produced by a fungus that contaminates crops. Aflatoxins are detrimental to human health, and can even cause death. They suppress immune systems and are associated with stunting in children. Aflatoxins also reduce crop value—at least \$450 million in commerce is lost annually to African economies due to aflatoxins.

Aflasafe is a revolutionary biocontrol product developed by IITA, United States Department of Agriculture – Agriculture Research Service (USDA-ARS), and national partners. So far, aflasafe has been reported to achieve up to 98% efficacy in reducing grain contamination on the fields and stores of farmers where aflasafe products are registered or in the process of becoming a nationally registered in 11 countries.

But farmers will not be the sole beneficiaries of the technology. IITA envisages a scenario where every African farmer will apply the product on their field, producing aflatoxin-safe grains for their families and communities buying from the market. This is expected to positively affect the health conditions of people and improve profitability of maize and groundnut value chains.

The new aflasafe Technology Transfer and Commercialization Project (aTTC), funded by a \$20 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and USAID, was launched on 1 December to be implemented in 11 countries consisting of Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. aTTC will be led by IITA with support from USDA-ARS, Chemonics, Dalberg Global Development Advisors, the Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa of the African Union (PACA), national institutions, and Regional Economic Communities such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

aTTC places partnership with the private sector at the core and is working with business partners that can help to achieve the goal of producing an effective, affordable product that would ensure that farmers, consumers, and communities are protected from the deadly effects of aflatoxin contamination.

“To get aflasafe to the masses, we need many companies, millions of small-scale farmers, distributors, who know what aflasafe can do to apply it. IITA is excited because the Institute is on the edge of reaching this goal,” IITA Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery, Kenton Dashiell said.

Corroborating the need to work with private businesses in getting the technology out, Ranajit Bandyopadhyay, IITA Plant Pathologist and leader of Africa-wide aflasafe Initiative who had been working on the product for more than a decade now, noted that “This product is indigenous! Developing the technology was not difficult, taking it out to the end users is the challenge; therefore, partnership is very crucial”.

The aTTC project is designed to identify and enable partners for manufacturing/distribution of aflasafe, and increase its availability. The launch event in Ibadan had researchers, farmers’ organizations, private and public sectors partners in attendance.

Also speaking at the launch event, Amare Ayalew, Program Manager, PACA, highlighted the need for disseminating the innovation to the farmers.

“African farmers need game-changing research technologies like aflasafe to meet aflatoxin standards for international trade and also to nourish their families and other people who eat their produce with wholesome produce” Ayalew stated.

Managing Director of the aTTC project, Abdou Konlambigue, said that the project is designed to identify strategic options for partnerships with private companies, and/ or government entities, execute those partnerships, and help ensure that aflasafe reaches millions of farmers throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

“We look forward to making sure that this technology reaches the hands of farmers in the soonest time possible through strategic partnerships with governments, the private sector, and other key stakeholders. Ultimately, we want to ensure that African farmers produce safe food and their income is reassured by adopting aflasafe.”

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**About IITA [www.iita.org](http://www.iita.org)**

The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) is a not-for-profit institution that generates agricultural innovations to meet Africa’s most pressing challenges of hunger, malnutrition, poverty, and natural resource degradation. Working with various partners across sub-Saharan Africa, we improve livelihoods, enhance food and nutrition security, increase employment, and preserve natural resource integrity. IITA is a member of CGIAR, a global agriculture research partnership for a food secure future.

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