

Presence of aflatoxin in food produce alarming - GFAP



BUSAC Fund

Advocacy for the Poor

The Ghana Federation of Agricultural Producers (GFAP), has raised concerns over the high levels of aflatoxin-poison in agriculture produce.

GFAP, which is the national umbrella-body of farmer organisations, said apart from posing a threat to human health, aflatoxin also threatens food production due to the presence of a soil-inhabiting fungus called *Aspegillus flavus*.

It said the fungus infects crops such as maize, groundnuts, cassava and yam chips; and that the poison it contains is a potent antecedent of cancer that can suppress the immune system of humans and animals, thereby making them susceptible to diseases.

In a press release, GFAP said aflatoxin can occur throughout the food value chain - from the stage of crops growing on the field to them being consumed at home.

"The high levels of aflatoxins in our agricultural produce has been the main problem confronting our members and other farmers, and this prevents us from meeting both local and international food safety standards - thereby limiting our market access and incomes, as well as threatening our business environment," GFAP's statement bemoaned.

It added that across the African continent, and Ghana in particular, awareness about the aflatoxin problem and its mitigation approaches is very low - and even non-existent in some communities.

It is in this light that the

BUSAC Fund supported GFAP financially to conduct research into the menace of aflatoxin.

It said research findings and other studies have shown low to high levels of aflatoxin in various food products and even human body fluids.

"GFAP, with support from the BUSAC Fund, has educated/sensitised some smallholder farmers on the control and management of aflatoxin in maize, groundnuts and other crops while advocating government to fulfil its commitment to provide broader and better extension services and enhanced storage facilities for smallholder farmers," the statement indicated.

"Studies have also shown that it is possible to reduce aflatoxin levels in food crops and products using various methods," it noted.

It added that Aflasafe GH02, developed by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, is capable of controlling aflatoxins.

Aflasafe GH02, it further explained, is a 100% natural product that fights aflatoxin. It is believed that when properly applied and combined with good agricultural practices, it can effectively control aflatoxin during crop development, harvesting and storage.

"GFAP is therefore strongly recommending our government through the Ministry of Food and Agriculture and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation to make adequate preparation and take the necessary steps to make the Product Aflasafe GH02 accessible and affordable so as to be available for all farmers.