

# Agriculture

www.independentngonline.com



DAILY INDEPENDENT

FRIDAY, MAY 1, 2009

odelibishop@yahoo.com TEL: 08023428888

Stories by Onche Odeh  
SENIOR CORRESPONDENT

## Toxic Chemicals Threaten Nigeria's Food Security

Food security as envisioned for Nigeria under President Umaru Musa Yar 'Adua's seven point agenda may not happen if effort is not mad to reduce the prevalence of toxic substances produced by fungi, the Nigerian Mycotoxin Awareness and Study Network has said.

The network, which is a member of the International Society of Mycotoxin (ISM), has also warned that the strategic grains reserves of the Federal government of Nigeria may be under threat of contamination by aflatoxin and other chemical produced by some moulds. The chemicals have been linked to strange deaths after meals of meals maize, ground nut and other crops.

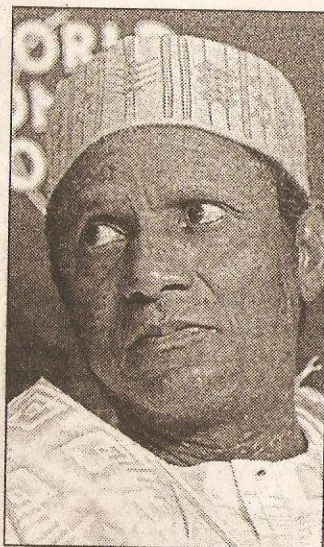
President of NMASN, Professor Stephen Fapohunda, who spoke about the risk Mycotoxins posed to the country's food security at the fourth Annual Conference of the network, held in Ibadan, during the week said it has also caused a remarkable reduction in the export value of some of the country's agricultural products.

"Reduced export value of crops like maize, sorghum, peanuts and cocoa, increased customer cost, less nutritious food and feedstuff for livestock are some of the economic implications of the high prevalence of mycotoxin in Nigeria," Fapohunda said.

According to him, when a contaminated food is consumed repeatedly, even at low levels, it causes disorders of vital organs of the body leading also to immune-suppression.

Some of the mycotoxins that cause contamination of food crops and feeds for livestock are aflatoxin, ochratoxin, fumonisin and patulin.

"Health risks arising from ingesting mycotoxins are quantified as sometimes exceeding risks associated with other food-related contaminants such as pesticides, additives, heavy metals and microbial agents,"



President Yar 'Adua

he added.

Executive Director of the Nigerian Agricultural Quarantine Services (NAQS), Dr. Mamman Magaji, also

confirmed that Nigeria gets regular alerts from trade partners in Europe and other parts of the world informing of high mycotoxin levels in exported food products.

"Quite often, Nigeria receives health hazard alerts from our trading partners especially from European Union informing us that, exported grains and food products contained unacceptable level of mycotoxin, especially aflatoxin B," Magaji said.

Aflatoxin B is usually produced by the fungus, *Aspergillus Flavus*.

Speaking in an interview with Daily Independent at Ibadan, Magaji said that it has become necessary to take critical look at the storage methods used at the various silos used at the various strategic grain reserves.

He also said, the use of quick mycotoxin detection methods

could help keep the cereals and grains safer for consumption, hence ensuring food security in the country. He said this would be extended to the various point of entries and exit in the country.

"Quick methods of mycotoxin detection in the fields and on the commodities at the point of entry and exit will greatly assist the farmers, food traders and regulators," he said.

Under The emphasis would be on the development of modern technology, research, financial injection into research, production and the development of agricultural inputs. This is expected to revolutionise the agricultural sector leading to a 5-10 fold increase in yield and food production. This will result in massive domestic and commercial outputs and technological knowledge transfer to farmers.