

## **Cost of Aflatoxin to the United States Peanut Industry.**

**M.C. LAMB\***, R.B. SORENSEN, and C.L. BUTTS. USDA-ARS National Peanut Research Laboratory, Dawson, GA 39842

Aflatoxins are toxic secondary metabolites produced by *Aspergillus flavus* (Link) and *A. parasiticus* (Speare) that contaminate staple crops like peanut (groundnut), maize, sorghum, pearl millet, chilies, pistachio, cassava, etc. Aflatoxin may be found in milk from animals fed with the contaminated feed. Strict mandatory guidelines are imposed to prevent contaminated products from entering the edible food supply. In the US, the Food and Drug Administration has established an action level of 20 µg/kg for total aflatoxins in human food while industry-imposed action levels are lower than the FDA limit. Many countries have established even lower tolerances, including the European Union's limits which are 2 µg/kg for aflatoxin B1 and 4 µg/kg for total aflatoxins. While these regulations ensure a safe food supply, they impose an economic burden on various segments of the peanut industry to guarantee compliance. A study was conducted during the 1993-1996 crop years to quantify the cost of aflatoxin to the southeastern region of US. The average net cost to this region was \$25.9 million per annum with a range of \$10.1 to \$43.8 million. An updated, nation-wide study covering the 2016-2019 crop years was conducted showing the current cost of aflatoxin is higher than the previous study. Data from the 2016-2019 study will be presented. As a result, a coordinated industry-wide aflatoxin taskforce has been established to target and support research focused on technology and systems to manage or eliminate aflatoxin in US peanuts.